MARTYR:
A Passion in Three Acts

A dissertation by
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PREFACE

In this preface I intend to assist my reading audience in the fruitful occupation of bringing the aesthetic imagination to a playscript. Directors, actors, designers, playwrights, and skillful students of dramatic art know that playscripts require a reading that interprets dramatic literature in terms of theatrical production. To this end I will comment briefly on the performance, directorial and design concepts with which I composed *MARTYR: A PASSION IN THREE ACTS*. I leave to my reader the final aesthetic judgment of how the playscript has fulfilled these theatrical concepts.

PERFORMANCE CONCEPT:

In an overall sense, this script has grown from the intention to incorporate in dramatic form the theoretical construct of *theatricality* as set out in the work of John Gassner. I will not elaborate extensively on what this concept of *theatricality* means. The script intends to articulate theatrically, and I hope dramatically, what Dr. Gassner's idea is. If the reader is concerned for a more detailed examination of this idea and my understanding of it, I refer them to my paper *From a Theatre of Heroes to a Theatre for Lovers*, published in the journal **FORMS** vol 2 number 1.

The concept of *theatricality* as I understand it and have used it in this script requires as active a participation from an audience *in the making of each and every theatrical production* as can be stimulated and evoked in an audience. Certainly audiences accustomed to relating to theatrical performance from the audio-visual stance and within a peephole perspective on the performance are unable to blossom forth as fully rehearsed participants in a play with which they are unfamiliar. I am not advancing in my script the necessity for an audience to become lead performers. I am suggesting that a script and its performance can and often should involve their audience in the dance and the story-telling of dramatic art. This script has made such an attempt.

The reader should keep in mind, therefore, that a performance of this script will freely invite the audience to transcend its usual status as spectator. It is no accident that the courage for and rationale behind this transformation from spectator to creative participant are intrinsic elements in the Christian message of salvation. Christians believe the redemptive mystery of Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection transforms human beings from finite creatures condemned, through sin, to death into eternal children of God freed through Jesus Christ to be cosmic co-creators with the

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Holy Trinity. I have tried to reflect this salvation mystery in the playscript's performance concept in accord with which the normal boundaries separating audience from performer are obliterated.

A person's psychological resistance to the risks of assuming with a group of strangers an unknown participatory role for which a person feels inadequately prepared establishes its own boundary. This psychological boundary may be too overwhelming to cross at the outset of the play. For this reason, the audience is offered on two occasions the opportunity to become creative participants in the making of a theatrical performance. The first opportunity arises in ACT 1 Scene 3. The second occurs at the end of the play. On both occasions, the audience should feel no pressure to participate.

The performing company must insure the audience's free expression of personal desire to participate in the play's performance. To coerce an audience or to plant rehearsed participants in an audience would violate the script's performance concept and obviate the theatrical experiment of transcending the normal boundaries between audience and performance.

DESIGN CONCEPT:

The spacial design for a theatrical performance delimits concretely the implicit boundaries and restraints upon both spectator and performer. The proscenium stage design with its peephole perspective on performance rigidly carves out spatial limits that confine an audience to the role of spectator. It would be virtually impossible to incorporate an audience into a participatory role if a proscenium design were employed in the performance of this or any other script. Rather than describe my design concept for this script, I am including three photographs of the stage model I built in conjunction with the script's composition.

These photographs clearly visualize my design concept. As the reader will see, the audience seating areas are distinguishable but more importantly inseparable from the performance areas. In fact to reach these seating areas, the audience must first enter the performance space. This avenue of approach is not accidental. The more familiar audience members are with the performance space, the less reluctant they might be to enter it as participants when the opportunities for doing so arise.

Prior to the beginning of a performance, the audience should be encouraged to gather in and move about the performance space. While they may seem insignificant, ushers, when seating an audience, set the boundary between audience and performance and the audience's tacit permissions for inter- acting with a performance. Theatre ushers should not rush to seat the audience; instead, they should foster

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feelings of informality and conviviality with the arriving audience.

With the audience seated, the performance could begin. However, if the performing company wants to address persons' psychological resistance to participating as Martyrs in the performance, the company director could greet the audience prior to the opening of the performance and prepare the audience for participating in the performance. The decision to address the audience and prepare them for interacting with the performance that follows must belong to the director and performers. I only mention this possibility to demonstrate how the design concept can be extended to include the dissolution of not only spatial separation but also psychological separation between audience and performance.

DIRECTORIAL CONCEPT:

Comment on the directorial concept behind *MARTYR* invites problems. As someone who has written, directed, and acted in the theatre, I am acutely aware of and sensitive to the division of labor in the theatre. I do not wish to provoke resentment from directors and performers who might feel I am transgressing upon their domain. I have no desire to comment on characterization or to interpret the narrative line in the script. I am cognizant of the directorial problem that audience participation creates. Therefore, I conclude this preface with a few suggestions on reducing the tension between rehearsed performers and audience participants.

Rehearsal is the one untranscendable component of thearical performance that differentiates an audience from a company of performers. Including audience members as participants can jeopardize the delicate structure of dramatic rhythms performers meticulously create in the process of rehearsing their performance. Unless the nature of the performance is improvisational and open-ended, dramatic artists are obliged to prepare their performance and its aesthetic conclusion before they bring their work before an audience. My playscript does not void this obligation. Indeed, the complexity and detail of this script need the depth and dedication which the rehearsal process provides. However, the problem created by incorporating the novel unrepeatable grouping of audience participants in a rehearsed performance might be resolved by the rehearsal concept.

I have mentioned already the possibility of the director preparing an audience for audience participation. In a limited sense, this preparation is akin to rehearsal. The accommodation of the audience participant prior to the actual participatory event can operate throughout the performance which includes intermissions at designated intervals.

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In ACT 1 Scene 3 the script establishes the first occasion for the audience to join the performance as Martyrs — witnesses to Jesus' passion. The script clearly defines the character of this transformation event. According to the narrative the Apostles accept the initial responsibility for guiding the Martyrs through their martyrdom. In parallel with this narrative thrust, the rehearsed performers need to lead the unrehearsed audience participants through their participation.

In ACT 1 Scene 4, the Martyrs join the Apostles' and Jesus' last supper. As I envision the event, the last supper is an actual meal with food and drink. During this meal the Apostles should tell the Martyrs what to expect and how to act in the remainder of the Act. Since the Martyrs' role in ACT 1 is relatively passive, this informing of expectation should not be difficult. After all, most of us know how to eat and how to listen to someone else telling us stories. One hurdle in ACT 1 might develop within the context of the Martyrs' response to the presence of Legion at the last supper. The script stipulates that only Jesus and Judas are aware of Legion's presence. Therefore, the Apostles need to warn the Martyrs to feign ignorance of the entrance and action of Legion and to imitate the Apostles' reactions when Legion does appear. Since the role of Legion is introduced in ACT 1 Scene 2, the Martyrs should have no problem identifying them when Satan's Legion enters their midst.

I assume the script's performance will include two intermissions — one following each of the first two Acts. During these intermissions, the director and the performance company will be able to prepare the Martyrs for their role in the subsequent Acts. The concretization in performance of the role of Martyr is not my decision. The script has articulated the role and its place in the passion narrative. I must leave to the director and a company of performers the decisions that bring the script to life. I do suggest, however, that the idea of rehearsing, which is to say preparing beforehand, the audience participants might serve to resolve the problems that emerge when rehearsed performers join with unrehearsed audience participants to create the magic and vitality of dramatic art.

In conclusion, as you read *MARTYR: A PASSION IN THREE ACTS*, I urge you to think of the script as a blueprint for theatrical performance. The script is a passion play and the principal measure for understanding the passion of this script's Jesus is contained within the theatrical potentialities of the script.

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

COSMIC ACTORS

Jesus
Angels' Chorus
Satan
Legion

APOSTLES

Simon Peter
Andrew
Matthew
Phillip
Thomas
Bartholomew
Thaddeus
James the Elder
James the Younger
John
Simon the Zealot
Judas

FOLLOWERS OF JESUS

Mary, the Mother of Jesus
Lazarus
Mary Magdalene
Chusas
Veronica
Joanna
Innkeeper
Enoch
Water Bearer
Infirm Outcasts of Jerusalem
Martyrs

ROMANS

Pontius Pilate
Steven, Pilate's Lover
ROMAN SOLDIERS
Cassius
Antonius
Demetrius
Marius
Pilate's Palace Guard
Soldiers at the Cross

SANHEDRIN ELDERS

Annas
Caiphas
Gideon
Saul
Amos
Nathan
Joseph
Nicodemus

JEWS

Herod
Barabbas
Disthmus
Herod's Steward
Temple Guards
Sanhedrin Crowd

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MARTYR: A PASSION IN THREE ACTS

SCENE 1 ACT 1

The drama begins with a choral intonation of

Angelic Chorus Holy, holy, holy Jesus, Son of God, Ablaze with life. Heaven and earth rejoice from your blessings. Loving light for our life.

The repeated presentation of this hymn creates the illusion of an angelic mantra offered cosmically in praise of the son of God. The hymn begins mutedly. The choral sound should mix with the sounds an audience makes as it gathers in the auditorium. The volume increases slightly to distinguish the hymn from the other sounds in the auditorium. At this point, however, it should not intimidate the audience into silence. The convention of dimming house lights is sufficient indication of change. As the house lights dim, the volume and intensity of the hymn return to the opening level, where it remains a mantra repeated throughout the first act. A taped recording may accomplish this end more effectively than a live choir.

Setting: An interior room with table and chairs. On the table rests food and assorted utensils.

Opening Dramatic Action: An Innkeeper flits about the table. Visibly nervous, he seems consumed with the need to arrange and rearrange the table settings. The wine goblets, the baskets of bread, the meat tray, the position of the chairs please and then displease him. The meat is too cold. The bitter herbs are too mild. The wine seems vinegarish. His son, sitting in the doorway, ignores him. The boy's uncooperativeness irks him and draws a grieved look from the unrepentant boy. This Nervous Nestor's ballet continues uninterrupted by the silent, hunched man who enters carrying a water pitcher upon his neck, head, and shoulders. The boy, whom the man passes, continues his self-indulgent play. The Innkeeper senses the water bearer's presence. Recognition brings another round of frenzied labor and the statement

Innkeeper Already?

The water bearer nods. Some water spills from his pitcher. The Innkeeper bends to wipe it.

Innkeeper I've arranged the room and prepared the food. My son, Enoch, will sit outside. An unintimidating guard, yes; but he will serve you...sometimes. He is a good boy. Dim at times, but then would he be a boy if he weren't?

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Weak laugh. The Innkeeper looks up from the floor only to see that the man with the water pitcher has left the room. In his place stands Judas Iscariot. The Innkeeper stiffens. Judas removes a few silver coins from his purse to pay the Innkeeper. The Innkeeper scowls at the money in his palm and then at Judas. He drops the money on the table.

Innkeeper I must go now. The other guests. If you need anything, call my son. Enoch. Come, son.

They exit.

Judas I watched from Jordan's bank as the Baptist proclaimed you. I followed you as you gathered your eleven and then chose me as a shepherd might add a stray, hungry, unmarked lamb to his fold. I groped with you as you searched for self-understanding and the courage to live the destiny of your consequent identity. I rebuked your enemies' conceits and specious, malevolent attacks upon your teaching and healings. I ached with you to release the despised from their unjust yoke. I too stumbled in the darkness with only prayers and the hope for tomorrow's promise. Your transfiguration infects me and I tremble. Will you restore the House of David, the rule of Moses, the chosen nation of Abraham, the paradise of Adam; or will you, as I dread you intend, raze these beginnings and bequeath us instead temples of the Spirit, the Covenant of the yielding heart, universal communion of the Gentile with the Jew, a wholly other heavenly city? The Jew's devotion to tradition, the accomplished fact, the unchallenged repetition may exact the suffering of sin, but *PAUSE* If you are the Messiah, if you do deliver us from the bondage of sin *PAUSE* will your New Israel tolerate our memories, our weakness, the clay rooting our feet and minds? *PAUSE.*

Judas picks a bitter herb and eats it.

Why in the moment of your great decision do I ponder questions? What arrests my spirit and separates me from the angels proclaiming your blessedness? Take care, Judas, not to question your Master's wisdom. Your creaturely concern may lead you astray. Sheep are meant to follow the good shepherd even if he leads them to the altar of sacrifice. My hands tremble with the fear that in this our passover, a cherished time to rejoice in God's deliverance and a nation's bold exodus, your life will tear us from this memory with a meaning and a ritual of your own making.

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Enter Mary Magdalene.

Mary Magdalene My, my, my. Judas alone with his furtive glances and rigorous self-examination. Are you as anxious for his safety as I?

Judas His? Ours?

Mary Magdalene The Sanhedrin don't want us, Judas. To them we're born again misfits and renegades certain to relent once they separate him from us. Our spiritual leaders think in despots' terms. Sever the head from the heart and the heart shrivels. Their zeal to persecute him is vain. Passion mirrors wisdom.

Enter Simon Peter.

Peter Do you understand this woman, Judas? Once a harlot with not a pure thought in her head and an uncanny talent with figures ...

Mary Magdalene Simon, the humorless stone.

Peter Have I irritated? Oh unequalled convert to the Rabbi's truth, have mercy.

Mary Magdalene Perhaps if you heeded his example instead of the panic of your hunger ...

Enter Bartholomew and Thaddeus.

Peter What do you expect from a fisherman ... prophecy? Bartholomew, Thaddeus ... do you see? A feast to reward our fasting. He won't object ... if we ... nibble. Smell, taste this lamb, Bartholomew. One more day and I would have been as lifeless as this fig.

Enter Andrew.

Thaddeus This fig? Fig? Obviously not from the tree he cursed yesterday. Have you seen it? In one day a young ... promisin' ... vigorous tree shrivels and dies. And it ain't even the season for fresh figs.

Andrew For a man who stills tempests and disciplines the sea, stunting a fig tree is hardly astonishing.

Peter And where has little brother been?

Andrew To the end of the earth and back again.

Enter Thomas, James the Elder, and Phillip.

Thomas I tell you, I tell you, I heard them, I heard them bragging. *We're ... gonna kill that rabble rousin' son of a whore ... jus as shoon as, as we fine 'em.*

James the Elder And you thought they meant him?

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Phillip What other mover and shaker of the great unwashed – with a questionable parentage besides – is in town?

James the Elder Of course you're right, but I did hear of a, a, um, a Simeon whose fame is spreading rapidly from town to town. He's a crowd pleaser, yes sir, a crowd pleaser. Name preceeds him wherever he goes. Do they mean him? Seem's he's a very clever magician.

Peter I like magicians.

Phillip A deft magus doesn't inspire popular support.

James the Elder Well yes, but...

Thomas Temple police.

Enter Matthew and Simon, the Zealot.

Thomas Temple police. Drunk, drunk. I, I overheard them. They were leaving the t, t, t,

Matthew Tavern. Now that he's expelled the wine vendors from the temple, the temple guard sneak down nearby alleys to replenish their famed courage.

Andrew Since he rid the temple of its whores, thieves, gamblers, and vendors, they have it surrounded as though it were a chaste foreigner whom local sinners have taken to stoning for sport.

Enter Jesus, James the Younger, and John, his brother.

Jesus Simon, son of Jonah, you have done this, haven't you?

Peter Done what, Lord?

Jesus Lightened the table's load to increase your girth. *Brothers, eat. Jesus won't care. A little piece won't hurt. Doesn't the lamb smell divine? What's the harm in one little piece?* Put it back on the table, Simon.

Peter Lord...

Enter Mary, the Mother of Jesus who joins Enoch on the stairway leading to the banquet room.

Jesus False contrition demeans you.

Peter Yes, Lord.

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Jesus Simon's excesses are major, but his heart is equally large. What will we ever do with you? Now all will sit at table as one body. The meat and wine must strengthen us for the night still ahead.

END SCENE 1

SCENE 2 ACT 1

The setting: A deserted alleyway in Jerusalem. The street leads past the back entrance to the Cocks Inn where upstairs the twelve join Jesus in his final meal. Enoch and Mary the Mother of Jesus sit on the stairway leading to the upstairs room. In a voice delivered from offstage

Innkeeper I don't care how high and mighty he is, one rule applies to everyone– THOSE WHO CAN'T PAY, DON'T STAY. Let the whores comfort you in your drunkenness, caravan bandit.

Enter Barabbas drunk. He has lost control of his body and all attempts to recover his equilibrium result in exaggerated, comic pratfalls. He collapses.

Barabbas Pazz ... ish ... ish pazz ... pazz o ... o ... ober. Ish pazzober ...

Enoch rises, leaves Mary the Mother of Jesus, and approaches the prostrate frame of Barabbas, breathing heavily, nearly snoring. Enoch kneels and studies the face of the half man, half animal imprisoned in the wine. Barabbas belches and attempts to rise. Enoch scurries away to the distance and anonymity of his stairway perch. Barabbas fails to stand; he again collapses to a belching rest. A much smaller man, dressed similarly to Barabbas, enters. He carries a bucket of water. Having found Barabbas, the man (Disthmus) tries gently to wake him.

Disthmus Barabbas. Bear ass Barabbas. BARABBAS! Cheap son of a swine whore ... you stole my share, didn't you? And squandered it, on wine. Tonight the dice were mine. I can feel it. The power. I have the power. And you, you thief, you stole my wager. Bis ass, Barabbas. I should leave you here for the Roman vultures. BARABBAS!

No response. Disthmus struggles to bring the semi-conscious body, nearly twice his size, to a sitting position. After countless failures but with persistence and patience, Disthmus manages to prop Barabbas' back against his chest and between his legs. Disthmus attempts to place the water bucket between Barabbas' knees. He loses hold of Barabbas who slumps across Disthmus' legs.

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HIPPO!

Disthmus finally situates the water bucket between Barabbas' knees while he manages to retain Barabbas' body in an upright, sitting position. Disthmus carefully and slowly lowers Barabbas' head into the water bucket.

Drink, wino ... imbibe the waters of life. Drink or drown, makes little difference to me what comes of an unprincipled bandit.

The water revives Barabbas. Conscious but still imbalanced, he overturns the water bucket as he spouts water and clutches for air. The water soaks his clothes around his groin.

Never could contain yourself. Wine or women ... both strain your manhood. The heartless murderer surrenders his juices without a struggle. If you weren't a beast, what bandit would follow you, what other assassin would fear you, and what warring general would pay you. Wake up, clown. If they catch us in town, it's the cross.

Barabbas rises to his feet only to fall forward on his hands and knees.

I've seen more balance in a day old kid.

Disthmus stoops to aid Barabbas but slips forward onto Barabbas' back. The additional weight flattens Barabbas. Prone on the ground, Barabbas' body is tangled with Disthmus' body. Barabbas groans and returns to his sleep.

For the love of ... hot again. God, my leg. Barabbas, we have to get away from here. Roll over, ASS!

Enter Cassius and Antonius, two Roman soldiers.

Oh shit.

Cassius Scandalous. And in Jerusalem. Now if this were Athens ...

Antonius Now I know why the Jew insists on circumcision.

Disthmus Don't move, Barabbas. Oh God. If you want to live, just lie here and pretend ... and pray. Can't hurt. *Oooo, Jude, Jude lover please forgive me. I was just flirting, really. He didn't mean a thing to me. A moment of reckless abandon, thoughtless passion, but he never knew me, like you, Jude. Oooo, dearest Jesooo sorry. Wish you wouldn't drink so much lover. Not good for you. Makes you fart.*

Cassius These Jews and their damned religious festivals.

Antonius Who's to know what is sacred and what is a public outrage?

Cassius Exactly. Arrest these two old fruits and the next thing you know we're shipped to Britain for offending the authority of Herod's priests ...

UMI

Antonius Give me an Egyptian garrison ...

Cassius There the aliens understand Roman authority.

Antonius He's a big one – the dead one.

Cassius That he is. The little one has some spark. What would the Sergeant say if we brought back a pair of queens instead of the king of thieves.

Antonius *Now boys, I told ya to keep yer noses clean and yer eyes open for the big 'un ...*

Cassius *A three day pass to the man who brings me Barabbas.*

Antonius What I could do with a three day pass – get out of this hole. Find me some clean air and clean water.

Cassius And clean women.

Antonius He's a big one – the dead one.

Disthmus For the love of God, shrink. If they recognize you, we're both bound for Job's mound. *Jude, Jude, why won't you listen to me? I am ashamed. But he was sooo tall and you know how I just love ... big men. Did I know he would attack you – the beast. He stole my purse. A hardened criminal. They all said he was. No good rebel from the mountains. I'm sooo ashamed. Forgive me?*

Cassius I've heard enough. Excuse me, miss?

Disthmus *Ooo. Oooo. Yes?*

Cassius Stuff it.

Disthmus *How delightful.*

Antonius A large man stole your money?

Disthmus *I should say he did. And beat up my poor Jude.*

Antonius How long ago were you assaulted?

Disthmus *An hour?*

Antonius Where?

Disthmus *At the Cocks Inn.*

Antonius Have you heard of a fight at the Cocks Inn?

Cassius No.

Disthmus *Wasn't much of one to report. One punch and Jude was out. Man's a beast. Makes my Jude look tiny. He travels with friends, you know. What could we do, but crawl out the door. They were all laughing at my Jude. If I hadn't insisted, he would have defended my honor. Then I'd have me a corpse, not a lover.*

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Cassius Tragic tale. Perhaps if you'd come with us ...

Antonius To file a complaint.

Disthmus *But we couldn't. I mean, Jude once spent a night in a Roman cell. He's very sensitive, but can be very brutal. He erupts.*

Antonius We'll make a note of it.

Cassius We have no choice.

Disthmus *If you insist?*

Cassius We do.

Disthmus *Jude is so cute; don't you think so? But heavy. It is fortunate you boys came along. I might have spent all night tangled up ..... could you help?* It's now or never, Big Ass. Knives ready. Barabbas? Snore if you're with me.

Barabbas shifts his body and snores. Enter the host of Hades, Satan's LEGION clothed and made to look like clowns. Throughout the play they are visible only to Jesus; however, they interact with the other characters who are unaware of LEGION's interaction with them. The characters are aware only of inexplicable events and actions interwoven with their lives. Antonius and Cassius stoop to untangle Barabbas and Disthmus. Disthmus has unsheathed his dagger and prepares to thrust it into Cassius' heart. The nearest clown grabs Disthmus' arm and pulls him away from Cassius, who sees the dagger exposed in the hand of a startled and tumbling Disthmus. Cassius draws his sword and slowly circles the untangled Disthmus. Antonius and two of the clowns have pinned Barabbas to the ground. Barabbas lies face down as one clown sits on his legs and the other sits on his neck. Antonius' sword presses upon the base of Barabbas' spine. Disthmus attempts to rise. The other two clowns restrain him. He grabs his dagger to hurl at the advancing Cassius. The clowns knock it from his hand.

Disthmus What cruel nature leaves me defenseless? Save yourself, Barabbas!

The two clowns hold Disthmus' arms outstretched to form a cross with his body. They drag the unwilling victim toward the ready sword of Cassius.

Disthmus rushes forth to greet the Lord of Shadows!

The clowns impale Disthmus on Cassius' sword.

Antonius Move, thief. Move a muscle, breathe too deeply, twitch from fear, I will sever your spine forever.

UMI

Disthmus dies with blood flooding from his mouth and stomach.

Cassius Where is the sport in capture? Bleed, animal, shower my armour with the wine of triumph.

Antonius Mars favors you tonight, Cassius.

Cassius I will prepare my oblation with this dagger. MARS, I AM YOUR GRATEFUL CHAMPION, May your name always be praised among the heathen Jews.

Antonius We must bury the dead.

Cassius You would pollute yourself for this mosquito? Leave its whispering carcass to the hunger of vultures and wolves.

Antonius The prisoner?

Cassius Famed Barabbas. Yes ... we must claim our passage from Jerusalem. But hurry. Only legendary warriors are free to ignore the mercurial wrath of Mars.

Antonius The cost of election ...

Cassius Is a sensible fear.

Antonius Move, swine.

They exit. Then from offstage a voice

Satan Beware mankind, you are visited with the true wrath of unsung gods! MARS? A feeble device of a cosmically retarded imagination. Man worships the images of his sensuality. The guiding hand of this Cassian brutality? One who does not require his sniveling adoration. LEGION! ATTEND. I AM IN WANT OF REVERENT PROCESSION. I would be seen before the night grows too brilliant with theophany.

The clowns exit dragging the corpse of Disthmus.

END SCENE 2

SCENE 3 ACT 1

Setting: Satan's throne, majestic but isolated from everyone and everything. However, from the throne, the activity in the upper room of the Cocks Inn is visible. While Jesus and his chosen dine, this scene transpires.

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Opening Dramatic Action: Jesus and his chosen are eating. With dissonant fanfare, Satan's LEGION commence the solemn but grotesque procession of Satan to his throne. The angelic mantra to Jesus rises in volume to counter the adoration of Satan. Enthroned, Satan counters the banquet noise and angelic hymn.

Satan Templed joy resplendent with the songs of knowledge: Judaic psalmody from a lost age of Davidic greatness. Here am I, prince of darkness, prince of light, prince of universal chicanery, ruler of chaos and despair ... forced by cruel relativity into proximate witness of a chosen race devoted to creation's Lord. Idiots all, masquerading infantile prostrations as thankful praise. QUIET! Last supper indeed; a glutton's command on his inner circle to keep his memory alive with stews and marinades. YOU INVADE MY SOLITUDE! Will they listen? Never. The king of glory claims their hearts and holds them to absolute fascination. IMBICILES, LEAVE ME IN PEACE! Fisher's wives will tell you ... no rest for the wicked. Well, if no rest for me, then no rest for he whom the twelve call Lord. Glory now in this hour of victory. It will prove as ephemeral as your father's face. MAY YOUR VOCAL CHORDS RUPTURE! Here are you, caved in a darkness not unlike the depths of my deathly hate. You've entered this fabricated land perhaps in search of a lively story told for the benefit of civilized entertainment and possible enlightenment. But if you're inclined to gather with the sanctified around their holy actor, then I, arch angelic enemy, invite you to the dance of discipleship he offers. Let it be known that I obstruct no one's exercise of freedom. Surely the Holy One keeps a place at table for any of you in want of his community. Behold, his herald comes. Heed his annunciation.

Enter Matthew. In relationship to the audience, he stands where everyone in the audience sees him and feels an intimacy with him. He does not enter the area of Satan's throne; however, each is aware of the other.

Matthew Our Lord greets you with love and joy. He sends me to invite you to accept martyrdom in the company of the anointed and sup at their table. Who will come forward with me to the banquet of his heart where in peace you will feast on his body and blood and with his blessing rejoice in the dance of life? The table's made ready and the time of fasting is past.

The following lines are to be delivered only if no one accepts Matthew's invitation. If individuals in the audience participate, then Satan's address follows the end of the lines above.

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Will no one among you rise and celebrate the bounty of my Lord?

If no one comes forward, Matthew continues.

If humbled is how you would have me, then I kneel before you with outstretched palm and cry out for the alms of companionship.

Satan Such hesitancy of procession. Embark, if you dare. Quit the stillness and obscurity of assembled anonymity. Inversion rules this play; for what else would anyone think when gods become men and men become gods. The audience's departure from the auditorium makes spectacle of spectators.

PAUSE. If necessary, Matthew continues.

Matthew The harmony of discovery and surprise reverberates from the heavens, but no one soul moves to accompany me? Am I a leper? *PAUSE.* I will return to my Lord with your judgment. At this passion's end, I will come again to call forth love's witness from your heart.

If no members of the audience accept Matthew's call, then the stage instructions signifying the Martyr's actions do not apply for the remainder of the script until ACT 3, SCENE 3.

END SCENE 3

SCENE 4 ACT 1

If MARTYRS have come forward to participate, begin here:

Setting: The same setting as the previous scene. Matthew has been joined by the other Apostles. They have brought with them candles, white robes, and a water pitcher and cups.

Opening Dramatic Action: With Satan looking on, the Apostles form a circle into which they accept each member of the audience who came forward to participate in the drama as a member of Jesus' following.

Matthew Here stand you, who, in coming forward, honor our Rabbi's invocation. Blessed are you who hear the promise and follow in faith. From darkness to light you flee. An exodus as yours disquiets even the heartiest spirit. Accept this cup. Drink from its waters the covenant of peace. Abandon your apprehensions in the quenching of your thirst.

Satan Solemnical nuances and earthy symbols will not banish me. See how these fools tremble at their vain ascent. You call them into darkness and name it light.

UMI

Their restive bodies betray your Lord's confusion. Turn back, children, turn back before this desert's heat and desolation expose the truth that no manna awaits you, no covenant shall transform you, and no heavenly power will deliver you. Israel, o Israel, turn back lest the viper pierces your faith in all divinity.

Matthew and the other Apostles individually clothe each audience participant with the line:

Apostles With this simple robe, I clothe your blessed transfiguration. I receive you in the name of Christ – Jesus our brother.

After every audience participant is robed:

Matthew Robed with the cloth of his love, you are bound with the Twelve who likewise turned from tradition, wealth, and nation, to walk in light with the son of God. From this time, your name is Martyr. Abjure crippling pride. Abandon the fear for self. Accept our welcome. Love calms the tempest, surely it will soothe a quickened heart. Act with confidence attentive to the will and following from the commands of Him whose testimony you shall hear. We leave the darkened prison to the condemned and process into mystery's body.

Satan Do you hear? Do you hear, my fellow convicts, this siren's song? Beware the authority of outcasts. Only zealots and lunatics invoke the judgment of heaven.

If NO MARTYRS have come forward to participate, begin:

Matthew I am alone, Lord.

If Martyrs or no:

Jesus Tonight mates memories with eternity. Exodus has begun.

If Martyrs present, he continues:

Gather with us for the preparation of my father's meal. Feast with Simon, son of Jonah and a rock of devotion, Andrew, his wise brother, James and John, thunderous sons if ever there were, Thaddeus and Bartholomew, Simon, whose zeal would consume less patient men, Thomas, the mirror of faith, Phillip and cousin James, Matthew, my herald, Judas, the venerator, and Mary, the golden haired balm. Soon, too soon, my enemies will rip me from you, my friends. As this bread tears, so it is with me.

Satan Evil intrudes upon the union of man and God. The veil that separates the two is none other than my humble self.

UMI

Jesus This is my body.

Jesus holds a bread loaf.

Broken from you.

He breaks the bread into two pieces. On the reference to You he holds up one half of the bread loaf.

When you eat of my body, I am of you and you are one with me. In your meals re:member me.

Satan I am with you always, Jesus. From my pedestal I extend as if surface water rippling from the descending stone.

Jesus Sit. Break bread. Journey to night's end. When the cock crows only enemies will gather around me.

Peter What are you saying, Jesus? We won't abandon you tonight, tomorrow, or ever. Besides, with the crowds lending support, your enemies would not dare interfere. Even the Romans have grown cautious.

Mary Magdalene Listen to our belly dweller. He roams the city of his fantasy. True, the people once fought in crowds to see and hear Jesus, but ... has no one seen them withdraw from him and us as we walk through the city. Jesus' once grand following has diminished daily. Only the crippled and diseased outcasts wrestle among themselves to touch him and take from him a particle of his ... of his life. Soon they will retreat into their solitary hopelessness.

Peter Let our enemies come. Simon is not afraid. I've netted worse predators than a few feeble soldiers and old women priests.

Jesus When will my rock warm from the light? Simon, quiet your boasting. Have you danced with the corpse of death? Have you held the chilled hand of chaos? Have you climbed into the pit of hell? What are Roman soldiers and self-serving priests to the Lord of these principalities? Eat the feast, for famine is its twin. Eat, children. The angel of death stands outside the door.

Satan's LEGION stands on the stairway.

Satan I who have wrestled with Archangels. I who have seduced God's chosen into infidelity. I who have tainted genesis with knowledge; fratricide, and idolotry. I who shadow the world. How is it I must suffer this carpenter from the backwood, backwater regions of Galilee? God mocks me with mediocrity. Son he calls himself. Son of man, son of God, son of sons, no doubt. God plays me for a fool by sending me his jester to chastise my unforgiving nature. JESUS, CLOWN PRINCE OF THE

UMI

MOST HIGH, HEAR ME! I WILL NOT BE MOCKED. COMES YOUR HOUR WITH CARPENTER'S TIMBER TO REWARD YOU LET US SEE WHO PLAYS THE FOOL.

The first of the four clowns enters the room.

END SCENE 4

SCENE 5 ACT 1

Setting: Upper Room of the Cocks Inn.

Opening Dramatic Action: The remaining three clowns enter the room one by one. The last clown, carrying a duplicate of Satan's throne, enters. Their entrance slowly transforms Jesus from the cordial host to a detached bystander who appears related to that which no one else perceives. Jesus indeed recognizes what none of his chosen can see – the subtle intrusion of Satan upon the unity of his love for them and their love for him. As each clown enters and in time with each step they take, Jesus whispers the nearly imperceptible challenge.

Jesus Out.

The Apostles and the Martyrs should not register immediate awareness of Jesus' changed condition or his challenge to Satan's LEGION. The Performers : Apostles must divert the Audience : Martyrs from an awareness of the encounter of Jesus and LEGION and hold their attention to the meal. To block out any conflicting emphasis on Jesus and the clowns, the angelic mantra might increase in volume and intensity. The Apostles should engage the Martyrs in ad lib dialogue. The four clowns surround Judas. They sit him in Satan's duplicate throne. They begin to strip him of his simple clothes and dress him in a clown's costume. Jesus' command out has become mantric by virtue of its uninterrupted repetition. Matthew is the first Apostle to notice Jesus' transformation.

Matthew What are you saying, Jesus?

Still whispering

Jesus Out ... out ... out ...

One by one the Apostles recognize the change in Jesus. Bewildered, they inquire among themselves.

UMI

Apostles

What is he saying?
Can you hear him?
Is the meal over?
I think he's saying, *Lout, lout, lout.*
Who is he talking to?
Can you see what he's staring at?
What's wrong with Judas?
He looks pale.

These lines and any other appropriate ad libs create the impression of a general disorientation among the group. The intensification of Jesus' confrontation with Satan's LEGION builds. The singular and repetitious character of Jesus's command seemingly directed at the Apostles and Martyrs leads each one to stop eating and conversing. Their interaction diminishes until they stand in isolated and intimidated groups cowering at the outer perimeters of the room. The clowns have replaced the Apostles at the table. Jesus shrieks. The Apostles, save for Judas, and the Martyrs rush from the room. LEGION, Jesus, Judas, and Mary remain. At this point the clowns become the face and mouth for Satan's voice. When Satan delivers his lines, the four clowns, with puppet - like movement and stiffness, incarnate the presence of his word; i.e., they have become the devil incarnate. In their encounters with Jesus the clowns exaggerate the puppet nature of their existence. Nothing smooth or graceful shows in their form. Their contorted facial mask makes visible the slave's anguish at obeying the tyrant's will and mind. However, when they intrigue against Jesus; i.e., when their relationship is conspiratorial and not face to face, such as with the arrest of Barabbas – they are balletic creatures both delighting in darkness and vibrating from evil intent. Their puppet nature is exposed as such only in the presence of the freely loving one. These lines may be performed individually or chorally; however, the voice belongs to Satan.

Satan Is the son of God, Incarnate Word, Christ, King of Jewry, what else do they call you, carpenter Savior? Is Emmanuel possessed by me? Charity, Jesus, charity for a sinner?

END SCENE 5

UMI

SCENE 6 ACT 1

Setting: The street outside the Cocks Inn.

Opening Dramatic Action: The Apostles and Martyrs gather in the street. The Apostles have gathered the confused and frightened Martyrs for a return pilgrimage to Jesus and the Last Supper. In this scene and the scenes following the Apostles recreate the life and ministry of Jesus by using the full force of theatrical artifice to reenact the historical and dramatic sense to Jesus' life with them. In this scene Phillip serves as the narrator for the reenactment of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. These narrations suggest both the setting and the dramatic action for the following reenactments. The Director and Performers should integrate their final staging of these recreations with the directions implied in the narrations.

Phillip The crowd had been gathering for days. The word preceeded him.

John *Jesus, the healer, the sower of peace, the maker of dreams, comes. He comes to our valley. Let us go to the mountainside. Let us listen. Let us measure this man who before built tables, cribs, and closets. Let us learn his magic that it might work for us.*

Satan They came, carnival tramps, disbelievers, avid despisers of any truth, my cousins mostly. They came and camped on the mountainside. Meals were shared. Some gambled to occupy their idleness, while others gamboled in the fields. You call them fornicators. And the heavens opened wide, the mountains trembled, the earth prepared to feast upon their idolotries. They ran to the mountain and cried, *Fall upon us. Hide us from the gaze of the Holy One. Bury us forever, lest he find us and rebuke us for our ugliness.* You do have a flair for spectacle, son of Joseph.

Phillip We arrived before sunrise. The camp fires lit our way into the valley. Revelers, awaiting the clown, muffled the howling wolves and the bleating sheep. The ones wanting rest or silence for meditative preparation were consumed in an unnatural dissonance.

Satan Do you hear what he calls my children's gambit? Unnatural dissonance.

Phillip The absence of spectacle and circus triggered the crowd's bad temper. They had anticipated a legendary champion. Instead, a man whose gait isn't Davidic and whose manner hardly resembles Elijah's confronted them.

Peter Banded with fishermen, tax collectors, political zealots, women and children, he doesn't inspire worship. As he climbed the slope to address the crowd, many people spat on him.

UMI

Phillip He began simply enough. Thanking the earnest for coming. Joking with the drunks and hecklers, he asked if they couldn't muster silence, would they at least afford him the courtesy of sullen tolerance. His good humor disgusted them.

Bartholomew The people had come for miracles, signs of wondrous powers, a glimpse of greatness surpassing their historical limits. Platitudes and gentle blessings were not their wont.

Phillip The malcontents shouted insults to drown his voice, but Jesus, patiently and with a composure fit for a triumphant warrior, spoke.

Thomas

Sacred are you crying out from the hunger for God.
His bread awaits you.
Sacred are you grieving for the loss of your beloved,
Sacred are those who mourn with you,
You have known love.
Sacred are you rising above the lust to battle.
In your temperance fertility rewards you.
Sacred are you burning with the cause of justice.
Your flame will never fail to warm the abused and enslaved.
Sacred are you forgiving the fault of your brother.
You will reap the harvest of forgiveness.
Sacred are you purging your hearts of shadows.
God's countenance shall shine from within you.
Sacred are you soothing the wounds of war and calamity.
Warriors see in you heavenly childhood and weep.

Phillip His quiet forcefulness appeased even his most egregious critic. Then something changed within him. Perhaps the wind, the dust, the heat, or the temper of the people initiated transformation. Who knows. We follow him.

Peter The sheep are ignorant of the shepherd's ways; if they weren't, what need would they have for shepherds?

Phillip He seemed intent upon a presence no one else sensed. We felt a breach with him. He addressed himself, perhaps, when he said

Thomas *Holy are you suffering the pains of sin for the life of creation? God anoints you priest.*

UMI

Andrew What of my vision that day, Phillip?

Peter Tell us agan, little brother, of the noon's dust deviling your sight.

Andrew No one saw him like me. His body and clothes blazed — like nothing I've ever seen — not even the mid-day desert sun reflecting upon the lake.

Phillip Perhaps during the day you fell asleep. A fantasy fed by the day's heat and our anxiety with the crowd?

Andrew But the voice. Surrounded by temples of our fathers' fathers and flanked by Moses and Elijah, he stood radiant and untouchable. Then the voice ... searing my mind.

John *I AM HE, MY BELOVED SON. LET HIS WORD MATE WITH YOUR HEART.*

Phillip A dream?

Simon the Zealot A wondrous nightmare in theophany.

END SCENE 6

SCENE 7 ACT 1

Setting: In the street outside the upper room of the Cocks Inn.

Opening Dramatic Action: The Apostles continue their account of Jesus' ministry. The scene focuses the raising of Lazarus. Bartholomew serves as the principal narrator for this reenactment.

Thomas Y .. y ... y ...you oughtn't to forget the st ... st ... story of L ... L ...

James the Younger Lazarus.

John A tale told by Thomas the Twin and his interminable s ... s ... s ... s ...

Phillip Stutter.

Thomas Th ... th ... then y ... y ... you t ... t ... tell it.

Phillip I? I? Not I. Let the zealot speak. Abandon revolution ...

Bartholomew Frenzy for the time being.

Phillip Simon. Warm our estrangement with the remembrance of the Lord's finest miracle. The poor man's disturbed ideologies reverberate with archaic divinations and secret invocations. Speak, Simon. Beat your sword into David's lyre.

UMI

Simon the Zealot *The princes of this age and their satanic pleasures are condemned to dust. The hour of God strikes in the heart of his handmaiden. Soon, all will hear it tolled. Prepare, Beelzebub, prepare. The fires of hell wipe wickedness from the memories of the just. From avenging angels soars the Lord's glory. Those who deny the lowly humbled Lord, the avengers commit to the second death. Hardened hearts assure eternal death.*

Peter Apocalyptic, always apocalyptic.

Phillip Simon, our resident tragedian.

Andrew Lighten it up, lighten it up. A little comedy, a little comedy, or you'll never convert the pig farmers.

Matthew We understand his madness.

Thaddeus His bowels doncha know?

Simon the Zealot *The Morning Angel will break the seal and judge the nations.*

James the Younger Yes, yes, we know. *And he will drive the Angel of Death to the edge of the outer darkness where the guilty turn upon themselves with a great gnashing of teeth.*

John He often goes on like this for hours.

James the Younger Jesus says Simon's talent is to teach the rest of us patience ...

John in abundance.

Bartholomew A messenger from Bethany arrived in our Jordan camp with news that Lazarus, brother of Mary and Martha and beloved of the Rabbi, had died. Yet the news didn't upset Jesus.

James the Elder No, no, no, no, no. A messenger brought the story that Lazarus was sick. Jesus appeared unnerved. To those of us who urged Jesus to leave for Bethany that day and heal the lad Lazarus — he was a beautiful boy, not ugly like some of those who run off at the mouth — Jesus said only that the sickness of Lazarus was appointed, appointed, you know, from before his birth. Jesus said, and I don't understand it, that the father chose Lazarus to honor the son. Whatever he meant, we stayed in Jordan that day and the next.

Thaddeus There were some who argued Jesus leave well enough alone. The Sanhedrin wants him stopped, you know. Man healin' the lame, preachin' with stories and miracles 'bout holy love; man, such as he, is a force, mighty power. Sanhedrin know this.

Bartholomew Jesus said that Lazarus' death existed from the dawn of Eden to glorify the son and cast out all doubt lingering in our hearts.

UMI

James the Elder Almost right. Jesus said that Lazarus was asleep and that he was going to raise him up again for our faith.

Peter That's when John said...

John Well, if he's asleep, what's all the fuss about?

James the Elder Jesus laughed. John didn't know he meant Lazarus was dead.

Bartholomew As soon as the messenger told us of Lazarus' death, we left the Jordan banks for Bethany. We arrived the following day. Mary and Martha ran to greet Jesus at their gate ... though Mary seemed to reproach him.

Thaddeus Wrong on all counts. To be kind to the lad, I'd say he's a mite fergitful. Other less charitable folk might say deceitful. I won't, it's jus' this boy don't know, don't know his ass from a garbage pit. When we reached the town border, Martha the matronly hysteric comes runnin' up.

Peter *Rabbi, oh, oh our brother, sweet, sweet Lazarus whom you loved and who always, always praised your name with brotherly lips has perished. The plume of youth crumpled in the grip of uncaring death.*

Phillip Grief has a way of loosening up the poet in each of us.

Peter *In the dank, mildewed crypt, his body descends to dust.*

Matthew Such a hideous cliche.

Peter *Rabbi, your legend preceeds you. Your power magnifies your goodness. If only you had been here in his time of sickness, Lazarus would not have died.*

Bartholomew A calm Martha chastised her sister for rebuking the Rabbi.

Thaddeus Mary, who'd been grievin' at home, came to her kitchen door when she heard us drawin' near. A few neighbors had gathered in the sittin' room to join her mournin'. With the neighbors mumblin' 'mong themselves, Mary approached Jesus with a look ... well, plain to see she weren't happy. She told off Jesus almost same way Martha did.

Andrew *Sister, leave the Rabbi with his peace. He, too, grieves for the dead. Enter our home, Lord. The oven flame cooks bread. We will eat and rejoice from your presence.*

Thaddeus That's poppycock ... she didn't say no such thing.

Bartholomew Mary's public hysteria increased proportionate to Martha's quiet grief.

Thaddeus What's the use. Youth ... arrogant youth ... will have its way even at the expense of an old man's memories. At my age memory is the only pleasure left. Let

UMI

'em tell it, but remember not a word of truth in anything they say, 'cept perhaps about the miracle Jesus performed. Even those two upstarts cain't lie 'bout the Lord's marvelous work. Why, the sullen stones would proclaim them liars if they tried.

Bartholomew Martha shows a trace of cattiness when she asks Jesus,

Andrew *Did you not receive the messenger we sent you?*

Bartholomew Knowing full well by the messenger's report that he has.

Peter *Oh, Rabbi, you've arrived too late. Our brother is dead.*

Bartholomew The neighbors mourning with her now gossip among themselves.

Phillip *Is this Jesus not the miracle worker who moves the lame to dance, frees the blind to behold Yahweh's majesty, pipes a song for the deaf to hear, and battles wits with lawyers and scholars?*

Matthew *Certainly a man as well spoken of as he is could have rescued Lazarus from the final torment of sin.*

James the Younger *Rabbi, whose sin does Lazarus' death satisfy ... his own or his father's father?*

James the Elder *Clearly the Lord I am is not just. Why must a handsome young man suffer and die when a multitude of gnarled, decrepit sinners wallow in wealth?*

Bartholomew Jesus is unmoved by the blasphemies of their sorrow. Instead, he questions Martha.

Thaddeus Mary, you fool, Mary.

Bartholomew The one who anointed Jesus' feet with precious oil and, drying them with golden hair, incurred Judas' wrath.

Thaddeus Poor Magdalene. God grant me patience and strength.

Thomas Where have you put the body?

Bartholomew Hands in the crowd point soundlessly to a mound of dirt beyond the garden. A large rock covers the earth. Jesus weeps. The once blasphemous neighbors now praise him for his suffering.

Matthew *See how the man must have loved our Lazarus.*

James the Younger *His heart weeps.*

Phillip *How is it that we doubted him.*

Bartholomew All but a few bellow anew. The wind's teeth gnash. Amidst sobs, Jesus commands.

UMI

Thomas *Remove the stone separating the underworld from the living light.*

Bartholomew Reality awakens the mourners to more sensual concerns.

Peter *But Rabbi, my brother has been dead for four days. The stench ...*

Bartholomew Jesus insists.

Thomas *Faith, woman. Would you deny the glory God has prepared for this moment? Our brother will return and in new life reveal my father's will for all our brothers and sisters.*

Bartholomew No one knows what he means. Our two fishermen roll the stone away. Their noses are accustomed to death's putrification. The landlubbers perfume their air with garlands of flowers hung about their necks. Small consolation. The stench of death overpowers the most potent floral scents. But what is this? The wind is changing. It sweeps garden leaves and fallen buds along with the offending musk into the tomb. Jesus stiffens. His eyes glaze over. Sweat clots on his forehead and tumbles to the ground.

Thomas *LAZARUS. LAZARUS, RISE FROM YOUR BED. THE LORD OF LIFE CALLS YOU. LAZARUS, COME FORTH.*

Thaddeus Always the larger than life portrait. Jesus was less self-possessed. A simple, *Lazarus, come out.* Makes it seem Jesus had some gobbledygook ritual hidin' dead gods. No sir, jus' a straight-forward invite to live. Lazarus heard and came out of his tomb.

Bartholomew The shroud and linen covered corpse appears at the hole in the earth. Jesus instructs us to remove the burial linen and wash the pus and dirt from the sores on his body. Four days in the underworld and he returns to walk and laugh among friends and family. A miracle no soothsayer or magician of the godless empire has dared. Near collapse and in the midst of rumors, Jesus leaves Bethany. After we left, a Bethany local raced to Jerusalem to inform the Sanhedrin of Jesus' great deed.

Simon the Zealot *The Elders' spies permeate the web of trust and threaten to eclipse the light of noon.*

Phillip The Zealot foreshadows Armageddon.

Simon the Zealot *. Flee ... flee to the outlaw's shelter. The tyrant's sword ravages those who postpone or grab for idols. The abomination of desolation comes upon you*

UMI

as a thief in the night. In its final hours, the day's light turns cold and the moon neither rises nor shines. The heavens rain the holocaust. From these signs recognize the end of time when I pour out my life for the salvation of my own.

John Jesus calls us the reborn tribes of Israel.

Matthew Twelve tribes for the kingdom of madness.

END SCENE 7

SCENE 8, ACT 1

Setting: The outskirts of the Apostles' make-believe Bethany. In this scene his following and Jesus return to Jerusalem for Passover. In a parallel movement, the Apostles and Martyrs return to the banquet room by the end of the scene.

Opening Dramatic Action: The elder James and John set the scene for Jesus' return to Jerusalem. Peter portrays Jesus.

John From the wonder of Bethany, Jesus begins his ascent to the holy city.

James the Elder The passage is fraught with dangers.

John Rumor of the miracle creates confusion and mistrust among the superstitious, jealousy and anger among the infirm, and murderous intrigue among the nation's elders.

James the Elder His enemies increase.

John The priests and lawyers assail him with their inquisition as he climbs.

James the Elder The Sanhedrin prepare the bitter herb.

John We urge him to retire from public service.

James the Elder Only the mountains provide shelter from the hounds.

John He rebukes us. We try to comfort him.

James the Elder When he consoles us with prayers and instructs us in the way of his father's love.

John *If you love me, surrender your life and come follow me. In laying down your life, you will find yourself ... a welcome child in my father's house.*

James the Elder His ascension has not been without pain.

John *What shall I say to the wind? Protect me, protect me from the cup. The poison burns deep within. Father, why must I drink?*

UMI

James the Elder Some heard the heavens reply, while others sneered that the holy visitation was none other than thunder.

John The angels answer his prayers.

James the Elder His esteem increases.

John As do his enemies.

James the Elder We stand at the threshold of Jerusalem, great city of the covenant.

John He weeps.

James the Elder We try to soothe his pain, but we are not there.

John He weeps.

The clowns have transformed Judas into one of their own. They apply the final touches of makeup that mark Judas a descendant of Cain.

Inside the banquet room.

Mary Magdalene Lord ... Lord ... Lord, what has Judas done?

Satan Respond to the soft inquiry of your handmaiden, your premiere trophy in the hallowed halls of the redeemed. Take him home, Mary. Husband him. Bed him. Test his powers of forgiveness with your womb. Let him prove his manhood the way all men do. Thirty years out and still a maiden voyager.

Mary Magdalene You tremble but do not move. You speak to the wind but give no voice to your words. I hold you but you feel nothing. But for the lack of wings, you would soar.

Jesus Hush. Mary ... hush.

Mary Magdalene Softly you chastise me, still me, and then abandon me for trances. I am to sit here and watch you suffer the rage of specters? Judas, what have you done?

Satan Judas? Our contest? The shepherd's son labors to recover this lamb from the hunger of the wolf. The wolf reminds the shepherd that this table must feed all creatures.

Mary Magdalene I am the dream ... this room, my illusion. I speak to shadows. Set in the fool's mind, I expect the image to respond.

John and James the Elder He weeps.

UMI

Simon the Zealot

Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, I weep.
In peace I stand outside your gates.
You close out me and the gift I bring
You hide your faces from my tears.
I offer peace. You prepare for war.

Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, I weep.
Your enemies have embarked.
They will arrive with vengeance.
They will encircle you with their mighty swords.
They will pummel your gates, rape your women, murder your children.
They will leave no stone of your great city to spire into God's heaven.

Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, I weep.
Adulterous city, you fornicate with the idols of men.
You slaughter God's prophets. You murder his heralds.
Your infidelity pierces my side.
Perish in your sins. The Lord denies your prayers.
You've made my house a haven for thieves and gamblers.

Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, I weep.

James the Younger The city walls us out.

Andrew Jesus sends three of us through the gates.

Matthew At dusk we enter ...

Andrew Searching for an ass and her foal.

Matthew To parade a comic king before an unlikely nation.

James the Younger And the high priest's palace.

Matthew We find the ass tethered to a post.

Andrew She reeks with the stench of maltreatment and disaffection.

Matthew *Here now, where are you taking those animals? They are not yours to have.*

James the Younger Our master requires use of them.

UMI

Andrew Resistance melts with the mention of his name.

Matthew The scripture is completed.

Simon the Zealot *O Zion, your king comes, in gentle spirit, borne aloft by an ass' foal.*

John His entrance into the city is greeted with much excitement and popular celebration.

Thomas *Hosanna to the King ... Alleluia ... Hosanna to the King.*

Thaddeus *The Christ ... the Christ ... Rejoice in the Christ of God.*

Phillip *Give thanks to him who brings us the name of the Lord.*

Thomas *Hosanna to the King ... Alleluia ... Hosanna to the King.*

Thaddeus *The Christ ... the Christ ... Rejoice in the Christ of God.*

Phillip *Give thanks to him who brings us the name of the Lord.*

John The festive garland his ride with palm leaves and fresh flowers radiant from their bloom.

James the Elder Peace and goodwill welcome us.

Thomas *Hosanna to the King ... Alleluia ... Hosanna to the King.*

Thaddeus *The Christ ... the Christ ... Rejoice in the Christ of God.*

Phillip *Give thanks to him who brings us the name of the Lord.*

James the Elder The hatred of the Sanhedrin is forgotten.

John Until ...

James the Elder Until we pass by the palace of Caiphas.

Matthew The air stagnates. The people's thankful praise lessens.

Andrew A few less enthusiastic but determined stragglers parade him a little further.

Phillip Jesus halts his sweating mount outside the temple.

Thomas His gentle bearing vanishes.

Thaddeus Rage pumps through his body.

James the Younger Consumed with a wrath we've never seen, he herds the gamblers, thieves, whores, and venders from the temple.

Bartholomew The elders, priests, and lawyers challenge his authority to cleanse the temple. They attack the wisdom of his fury. Jesus ignores them and enters the sanctuary. He preaches to those with the courage to listen.

UMI

The Apostles and Martyrs reenter the banquet room.

END SCENE 8

SCENE 9, ACT 1

Setting: The banquet room of the Cocks Inn.

Opening Dramatic Action: Having reentered the room, the Apostles and Martyrs stand, sit, or kneel defensively and apprehensively at the outer edges of the room. They are unaware of LEGION's presence. LEGION has transformed the appearance of Judas to resemble one of the clowns in makeup and costume. The clowns are preparing to crown Judas with a fool's cap. Jesus strips to the waist. With a towel wrapped around his waist and a water basin in hand, he crawls to the enthroned Judas.

Jesus Resist, Judas, resist.

Jesus removes the elegant slippers covering Judas' feet. The clowns retreat a few steps. Jesus begins to wash Judas' feet.

The servant kneels before you. I suffer to cleanse you of their stain.

Judas wipes the makeup from his mouth.

The marks of thievery and idolotry have defiled the temple. I have scrubbed it but the stain will not come clean.

Judas smears Jesus' lips with the makeup on his hands.

Resist, friend, resist. You are a temple.

Judas covers his feet with his elegant slippers.

The spirit of God seeks sanctuary within you. The siege of decision has you encircled. I offer no peace. You must wield the sword. Will you conspire against me and your friends? Will you turn heel against me?

Jesus holds a silver coin before Judas.

You must choose in this moment between my father's glory and a tarnished imitation of Roman glory.

Judas snatches the coin from Jesus' hand.

What salvation do you see in the face of Caesar? Will you drink the cup I drink? Will you enter the desert's flames with me?

UMI

After fondling the coin, Judas thrusts it into his purse.

In the inferno I feel the children's fear as I hear the tyrant laugh.

Standing before Judas, Jesus cradles a cup of wine. He elevates the cup.

Resist, trusted brother, resist.

He hands the cup to Judas.

Drink the cup I drink.

Judas looks at the cup. He tilts it as though he were about to drink from it, and instead empties its contents onto Jesus' face.

New wine pouring into old skins bursts the skin and wastes the wine.

Judas accepts LEGION's crown.

Go. I have nothing more to give. Act as you have chosen to act.

Judas and LEGION exit in a processional form similar to Satan's opening entrance.

Abba, Abba, I have lost the sheep you sent me to protect. I could not keep the wolf away. Oh perverse mutation. In the wolf's jaws, the sheep becomes a predator. I AM BETRAYED!

In one choral sound

Apostles By me, Lord?

Mary the Mother of Jesus stands in the street outside the room. With Enoch by her side, she addresses her unseen son.

Mary, Mother of Jesus Who are you? ... My son, my son. The kettle is boiling over. The roof leaks. The garden yields only weeds. The home of your father needs repair. The years have fatigued me. An old woman needs a young man's dreams. Come home, my son. What does your suffering accomplish? My son, my son, the home of your father needs repair. Leave the agony of prophecy to motherless children ... Who are you?

Jesus Simon. Sit here.

Peter Me, Rabbi? Am I the one?

Jesus You are my rock.

Peter I am a fisherman. You call me a rock and the others laugh. I am Simon, the Mocked.

UMI

Jesus kneels at Peter's feet.

Lord, do not bend your knee to me. I am a man unclean. I am not worthy.

Jesus Our father waits to receive you. You will enter his house upon feet his servant washes. If you turn from me, his hounds will bar the way and forbid you passage.

Peter Then, Lord, wash all of me.

Jesus Simon, my rock, who am I?

Peter You are the Christ, anointed of God.

Jesus So you say — in faith?

Peter Lord?

Jesus Pray that you will not have to choose between your faith and your life.

Peter Rabbi, I am a man. What do you expect of men? We are not christs; we are laborers worthy of a living wage. The sun's heat drives away our desires and the night's chill burdens our dreams with doubt. I am a man, a man who loves you, Jesus. What more must I do?

Jesus Simon Peter, do you love me as I have loved?

Peter Jesus?

Jesus Simon Peter, do you love me as I have loved?

Peter Your question denies me, but I shall never deny you.

Jesus Simon Peter, do you love me as a brother?

Peter What must I do?

Jesus Serve my friends. Feed my sheep. Keep watch for the evil one. Brothers, sisters, worship in your bodies my father's love for me. Become our temple. Travel the earth. Preach to shepherds, artisans, Jews, Gentiles, sinners, outlaws, strangers, pagans. Preach the truth of love. Let no one intrude upon your mission.

Matthew Lord, who will rule over us?

Jesus Matthew, how little I have taught you. You see the world through Satan's unlit lamps. Rulers of this world tyrannize; they imprison human life with fear and injustice. Under Caesar's domination worldly tributes adorn the elect as they worship the images of their lust. With the sword's might, they grasp for earthly goods to hoard in treasure holds for the

UMI

day when plenty abandons the land. I have told a simple tale. Retell it so that the blind might see, the deaf might hear, and the lame might walk in my father's glory. If you want to rule those my father loves, then feed the hungry, heal the sick, free the possessed, wash the lepers' feet. All of you, bloated with your aspirations for grandeur and isolated from your pride, know that my father exalts the one who has emptied himself of privilege, of desire, of possessions, of images, and of relationships that would protect him, and has descended to the depths of servitude, even to the surrender of his life for the lives of his enemies. In the cup I drink, Matthew, you will find the answer to your question.

So that all might see it, Jesus elevates a cup of wine.

When you drink the cup I drink, I am with you.

As the cup is passed and its wine drunk, Jesus prays.

Abba, your holiness names you. Accept us into your heavenly household. As the angels love in heaven, let us love on earth. Make us this day one with your living bread. As your covenant promises, forget our sin. With the cup of salvation we wipe all sin from our memory. Do not bring us the tempter and his desert heat. We plead for deliverance from the evil one. Creation is yours, now and forever. Our meal is finished. We must enter the garden to await my betrayer. The hour is late and I am very tired. Come, we must go.

James the Younger To do what?

Bartholomew Raise the dead, call upon heaven's might, discover that he's just a man?

END ACT 1.

UMI

SCENE 1, ACT 2

Setting: Interior to the temple of Jerusalem.

Opening Dramatic Action: The leaders and influential members of the Sanhedrin are quarrelling. Annas, father of Caiphas, presides. He begins to address the Sadduccees in the room.

Annas Are not the tongues of lawyers most predictable? Contentious by instinct, these learned men capitulate to windy combat at the flimsiest of excuses. The Lord made lawyers so women wouldn't have to feel wholly inferior to men. Children, children.

Gideon The mob has proclaimed this Jesus, bastard artisan from Nazareth, king of the Jews.

Saul This is heresy of the first order.

Annas God's hour calls us to act. His advocates, we must impress the Sanhedrin with the righteous course.

Nicodemus I am confused. What evidence do we have to connect the man's will with the mob's obvious desire to adore anyone offering them the possibility of a different way of life? Mobs, after all, are ephemeral. The mind of chaos lacks any ability to retain an idea or an image once it is loosed.

Joseph Nicodemus is right. If we overreact to the support his ministry has generated, we lend credence to the scandal surrounding his name.

Saul Brother Nicodemus, if a fire threatened to raze an entire village, would you not rush to stop it?

Nicodemus I would.

Saul Would you reason that you fought fire with wood and straw?

Nicodemus I would not.

Saul You would cover it with water and dirt?

Nicodemus I would.

Saul A man appears in our city and frenzies her people with a flame that threatens to consume our cherished memories and unborn promise. And yet ... you would have the firemen rescue the torch. I marvel at your rationale.

Nicodemus Do we accuse a man for his brother's crime?

Amos The Lord burdens the child with the father's sin.

UMI

Nicodemus I am unconvinced.

Annas We are not surprised. We have reports. Since you refuse to honor your duty, I must insist you leave this Council.

Nicodemus I will not stand mute to this madness.

Joseph You aren't proposing that we murder the Galilean?

Saul Murder the son of God? Could it be done?

Nathan Words, words, words. Should we not convene the Sanhedrin? Should we let a blasphemous, malicious serpent twist the people's affection and perception until they rise against us and in this rebellion bring the Eagle's talons upon us all?

Caiphas Still with us Nicodemus? I thought you were asked to leave?

Nicodemus By what authority?

Nathan By the same authority that will save us from your champion.

Nicodemus And that is?

Saul The sword ... that crucifies.

Annas Are we agreed, my children, that this king of fishermen and whores ...

Nathan Must die.

Annas In spite of your mawkish cowardice, the Sanhedrin will condemn.

Nicodemus I will conspire with you no longer.

Annas Remember, Nicodemus, the sword swings in all directions.

Nicodemus Wise counsel, Annas, wise counsel for those with the ears to hear themselves speak.

Nicodemus exits.

Joseph But the law ... the law will not allow it.

Annas Yes?

Joseph The law will not let you rob a fellow Jew of his life.

Annas We will arrange for the Roman eagle to dispose of him.

Saul The genius of it. The mob will vex Pilate and his garrison with their grief and hatred.

Annas Our sacred duty to the covenant of our fathers' fathers demands us to act. Have we need for further debate?

Joseph When the question is whether or not to initiate the slaughter of a lamb given by God to the poor and the despised, then I say yes.

UMI

Amos If you genuinely believe Jesus is their lamb of God, then let his blood spare them the wrath of avenging eagles.

Pause.

Annas Excellent. Dear children, the Sanhedrin expects us. What's that commotion? A fight ... in the temple?

Judas, accompanied by the invisible clowns, rushes in. A temple guard chases after him.

Guard Here, now. You can't enter. Stop. By the order of Annas, high priest, stop!

Annas Explain this intrusion. By, by, by ... EXPLAIN YOURSELF, MAN!

Judas I am the betrayer — the one you want.

Annas The man's mad. Remove him.

Judas For silver will I barter ...

Annas At once. Remove him!

Judas JESUS! My kisses construct your cross.

Annas WAIT! Release him.

Guard But Excellency?

Annas Are you deaf as well as insolent? Release him.

Guard Excellency, this man is ...

Annas Remaining with us.

Guard Holy one.

Annas What have you to do with Jesus, the Nazarene?

Judas For silver I will betray his heart. For a kiss I will blaspheme the breath of love. I am unclean. No blood may wash me. ASK ME! and I will deliver the Prince of Peace.

Annas Do you know Jesus?

Judas Chosen. He anointed me with the call. JESUS!

Annas You'll lead us to him?

Judas I am cast away with vipers.

Annas Take this man to my son. You are to arrest Jesus of Nazareth. My son will accompany you should anyone question your authority. This man will find Jesus for you. Go prepared for a struggle.

UMI

Guard Excellency!

Annas Come, children, the Council awaits its mind. This charlatan savior becomes less and less a problem with each passing hour. The Lord is blessed indeed.

All Amen.

Annas Alleluia.

END SCENE 1

SCENE 2 ACT 2

Setting: The Garden of Gethsemane.

Opening Dramatic Action: The Apostles, minus Judas, and the Martyrs huddle around a fire. Alone, Jesus prays. Mary Magdalene, Mary the Mother of Jesus, and Enoch stand unseen in the darkness between the fire and Jesus.

John He is leaving without us so he can send the wind to care for us?

Peter Our Messiah, our nation's hope ...

Simon the Zealot *Who must suffer for the glory of God and the forgiveness of sins.*

Matthew Adam's sin.

James the Elder All sin.

James the Younger In the garden, he waits.

James the Elder Why does the solitary dove sing?

Thaddeus I hate the night air.

Bartholomew His ordeal ...

Thomas *Pray that the Evil One does not put your faith to test.*

Mary Magdalene enters into the light of the fire and addresses the Apostles and Martyrs.

Mary Magdalene Long ago ... in another garden ... man failed the test.

Peter Woman!

Mary Magdalene *It was she who bade me eat, Lord.* The root of all sin is woman.

Phillip What do you expect from a rib?

Mary Magdalene What misery Adam's pride has bought for woman.

Andrew This is the earth where the desert wind chills the flesh. The fire may warm us, but the night's cold surrounds us.

UMI

Mary Magdalene Long ago ... in another garden ... the seductive one tempted man ... and seduction shattered paradise.

Andrew Ancestral stories and imaginary gardens where God walked with man bear the markings of children's fables.

Matthew And the makings for priests' authority.

Mary Magdalene Where God walked with man — Brothers, has time completed itself?

Matthew The dinner wine and the fire's smoke have dulled your mind.

Bartholomew What's special about this garden. My feet are too familiar with it as it is.

James the Younger We've come through here many times.

Matthew He's right.

Mary Magdalene Is he?

James the Younger Of course I am.

Mary Magdalene Look!

Thaddeus You look. My hands are cold. My head aches. I'm tired.

Phillip We all are. Put your enthusiasm for this garden to good use, Mary our love. Gather more wood for the dying fire.

Mary Magdalene He shivers in pain.

Peter From the cold. Find him a sheepskin.

James the Elder And then find us some sheep dung — for the fire . For the fire!

Mary Magdalene A demon's curse on all of you. No one of you will rise from your sloth to comfort our Lord weeping there. Jesus ... the millstone of your anguish reduces you to a plank stretched flat upon the ground — like a crossbeam not yet molded to human need by the carpenter's gentle hands.

Gethsemane — how far removed from Eden are you? Is paradise reborn tonight? I wonder. If I could but penetrate your prayer, would I too see the gruesome phantoms erupting with one last appeal from the abyss of the damned. Embrace me, my Lord. Take comfort from the nightmare in my bosom. He didn't cleanse me to replay Eve for his Adam. Man knows what woman brings him in the garden — the serpent's serenade. I will not join in his temptations. Wood. I must search for wood to fire the passionless there too numb to labor in his name.

UMI

Mary, Mother of Jesus Who are you ... My son, my son. The kettle is boiling over. The roof leaks. The garden yields only weeds. The home of your father needs repair. The years have fatigued me. An old woman needs a young man's dreams. Come home, my son. What does your suffering accomplish? My son, my son, the home of your father needs repair. Leave the agony of prophecy to motherless children ... who are you?

The focus of the scene turns to Jesus and his encounter with Satan in the person of his LEGION. Satan's dialogue should be punctuated with LEGION's puppet-like but still mime-like display of Satan's mockish tempting of Jesus.

Jesus Is freedom so dear that I must atone with blood? Abba, I am your son. Hide me from the angel's wrath. Oh Abba, Abba, your love for freedom fills my cup with poison. Of this full cup must I now drink? Your enemies surround me. The tempter brings his lures to destroy my faith. Mark me, Abba, that he will know that I am yours. He comes. I hear his approach.

Enter LEGION

Jesus His LEGION travels at my side and taunts me, defies me, villifies us. Of this full cup must I now drink?

Satan Not many can endure the walk with God in his garden.

LEGION imitates the Apostles and Martyrs sleeping by the fire.

Daddy! Daddy! Daddy! I don't want to die. Let someone else. Send an Angel to suffer for me, Daddy! He has, boy. He has. You prissy. Why should *I* tempt you. *Daddy! Daddy! Daddy! I'm scared.* You tempt yourself. *I don't wanna drink from this cup. It's, it's, it's filthy.*

The necessity for this ritual eludes me. I am to lure you with a parade of images — LEGION, Prepare — all meant to separate you from obedience to your father's will. You discard the phantasms of temptation and honor the father. In this way everyone discovers what a good son you are. Even though you would have an angel drain it, at the moment of crisis, you down the cup of forgiveness and pay the barman with your life. Thus does God tempt the tempter. The obedient Son always honors love. But in the shadow between meditation and realization I think, *Maybe, just maybe, he'll stumble.* In the end your holy life condemns my dust. I spit on your love. A fair exchange ... conceit for conceit.

Enough mood. The Lord, I AM, commands this Jobian ruse to commence. With what enticement, then, shall we begin? A woman. Transform your chosen Magdalene. Make her a cunning Eve? No, too predictible. A sensual Bathsheba? No,

UMI

Satan You're not the adulterous type. Pity. Perhaps a beauteous Helen to arouse your ... Paris? I know! The mind reels from insight penetrating the cosmic mystery. I erect the seer's dominion. The kingdom of Sophia. Her word shall be your revel. Sweet mystery of light — descend, sacralize our desert and bestow your transparency of understanding. She arrives as a cat, tempered by eccentricities buried deep within her soul. All eyes grace your countenance, goddess of the mind's eternal eye.

Child eros, invisible, awake! Dance with this regal form. In the miracle of your ecstatic mating passion unveil the shrouds masking our greatest destiny and our secret innermost phantasy. You're immutable, boy. Balletic desire completed with the Word is obsolete in your age of kenotic passion? Flights from chastity are no longer the sport of holy men.

Isaac's temptation? That God stay the father's descending stroke. But does the father answer? Will Abba spare his child, his baby boy? Pass the cup to lesser hands than yours? Perhaps an angel's wing. Absurd image ... angel's wing. Almost as absurd as the hands of God calloused from years of creating the cosmos: a woodcutter's bench, a peasant's cupboard, a farmer's stockade. If Yahweh spared Isaac, why won't he spare you? Situation seems comparable. Unusual maternity. Nomadic life. Sacrifice of obedience. Birth of a nation. Seems unjust that Daddy would absent himself while the enemy pierced your flesh and spilled your blood upon skulls. Let me join your prayer. *Theo, on behalf of my client, the second person of yourself, I must appeal your righteous verdict — a summary judgment that reveals a tendency to excessive vengeance. Look at this ... this child. Open your eyes to him. What other father wouldn't raise up mighty warriors to save his life?* Yahweh, the God of Abraham, spare this Isaac the fury of ... of the sword I plant in the ground. Let the man who plucks it, make of it a ploughshare to cultivate the new Israel.

But no, from the hands that wrestle this metal from the earth comes Yahweh's judgment. God *must* flood the earth with a savior's blood. Pass him the cup. The boy-God will transform bile into a sea of blood where a guilty nation will drown its sin.

You're not Isaac — you're a flood, an ark, and Noah the faultless one. A veritable trinity.

But what is Christ's temptation? To be tempted to pass the cup of salvation to another? Is it not the temptation to redeem Israel? Lift it up to your heavenly glory. Forgive the primal sin. Remove the mark of Cain. Pardon the transgressions of innumerable Ninnevahs. Release from the bowels of death creation's beating heart. Walk a little further to the tree of life. Stretch out your carpenter's hands upon it and begin

UMI

Satan again. Make the world new. Purify all things. What will come of it? The covenant will be the same. *Aspire not to divinity! Accept creaturehood. Love me as I love you and I will make you my Chosen forever.* When you were a baby and ignorant of such things, your mother and father knew that, for all its waste, the desert from time to time affords the only protection. Your oasis won't replenish my desert. My desert will exist forever to pose the question ... what is Christ's last temptation — to pass the cup of salvation or to accept it?

Your LEGION awakes. Let us see its response to the lures I have strewn about your oasis.

Sweet John, child of your love, pursues the dance that neither amused you nor excited you beyond your tranquil chastity. Bold Peter, rock of certainty, magnificent specimen of obedience, whose penetrating, clever mind sees your Messianic essence and imposes for all to feel the print of his understanding. Will he cultivate a bountiful harvest of crusading holiness with the steel I planted? And brother Judas, who approaches with his own communion laden as they are with fear, suspicion, the intent to rid themselves of you — feeble weaponry for warring with God — will he drink from the cup and pour out the passover sign on the sons beloved of the holy father?

The following is a dance done without dialogue.

Judas enters with the temple guards and with Caiphas. John, still dancing with Sophia, is unaware of the intruders. Peter exhorts the unresponsive Apostles and Martyrs who fear Peter's new-found sword as much as the enemy. Fearful and cold, the company of Jesus chooses to huddle around the fire. The two Marys and Enoch move toward Jesus. Surrounding Jesus, LEGION blocks their approach. Still resembling one of the clowns, Judas moves through their circle and embraces Jesus. As soon as he kisses Jesus, the guards and Caiphas enter the circle and arrest Jesus. They bind his hands. Peter attempts to attack Jesus' captors. The clowns obstruct Peter's waving sword. Discouraged with Peter and fearful for themselves, the Apostles exit the garden one by one. Enoch approaches Jesus. One of the guards grabs for Enoch and comes away with Enoch's clothing. Nude, the young boy runs from the garden. With LEGION's imperial escort, Judas and his friends lead Jesus from the garden. Waving his sword in defiance, Peter runs after the consort now abusing his Lord. The two Marys follow. The stage is empty save for the Martyrs who have been abandoned by everyone now except for Satan.

Satan He calls me tempter. I did not lure you to your estrangement. His garden becomes your desert. Poor waifs. Do you not know that Christ calls converts to his suffering? Where has your exodus left you? Exposed. Naked. Disoriented. Fools adrift in a tempest. Your testimony has no court to hear it ... only the ceaseless wind

UMI

and the biting sand. And me — the reptilian misfit of mythology. You wish to witness? You want to turn your hearts and minds to Theo? Then become my charge for a while. Even in defiance one serves the divine plan. The son's test has not ended. Feast and fast. Fast has begun. He warned you, did he not? If feast is what you will, exit the stage the way you entered it. Reclaim your seat with the rest of them.

Still remaining? LEGION, ATTEND!

If the Martyrs still remain in the performance at this point, the following is enacted. The clowns enter with masks resembling goats' heads, the clowns' faces, Cain's markings, Judas' markings, and other appropriate Satanic images.

Satan Mask my herd that God not see their faces and perish from shame. Drape them in the cloth of righteousness.

LEGION dresses the Martyrs in the robes of the Sanhedrin.

I charge you to sit in judgment of the Son of God. This is the judgment you shall enter.

Clown 1 GIVE US BARABBAS!

Clown 2 MESSIAH KING

Clown 3 SAVE YOURSELF!

Clown 4 CRUCIFY HIM!

All

GIVE US BARABBAS
MESSIAH KING
SAVE YOURSELF
CRUCIFY HIM

Satan LEGION, lead his witnesses into the trial.

END SCENE 2

SCENE 3, ACT 2

Setting: The temple in Jerusalem.

Opening Dramatic Action: Chained, bloodied, physically weakened, in torn clothing,

UMI

Jesus stands alone in the center of the stage. He is beyond anger. In silent resignation he accepts the abuse of human and cosmic evil. Instead, he burns to love, without fear and without division, all creation. His trial before the Sanhedrin is about to begin. The Audience constitutes the general members of the Sanhedrin. The house lights are on to signify the connection of the Audience with the trial. The temple's Menorah stands at the entrance to the Elders' throne. Annas enters carrying the Torah. Passing the Menorah, he lights the first candle. As he lights the candle, the house lights dim. Saul, Nathan, Gideon, and Amos enter one by one and light a candle. With each successive lighting of the candles, the house lights and stage lights approach complete black. Caiphas enters and lights the sixth of seven candles. With this, the remaining stage light is a spot on Jesus. LEGION enters with the Martyrs. Together, Martyrs and LEGION encircle Jesus on the fringe of the remaining light.

While the Sanhedrin Elders are entering and assembling the Council, and during the continuing dimming of the house and stage lights, Judas delivers this monologue. Sitting at the foot of Satan's throne, he ponders his thirty pieces of silver and coin purse.

Judas Often you escaped the hands of hate and the executioner's will. In town after town these last few months the crowds were not always friendly. Your Sabbath healings fired your enemies. Conspirators gathered everywhere we traveled. Their reports to the Sanhedrin increased. This enlarging malice brought only misfortune to you and the eventuality of their vengeance. The hour you spoke of has come.

They will call you to deny your claim on heaven. The life they know and oversee will be yours for one simple denial. *Are you God or are you a man?* Respond that you are of the clay and nothing more. Promise to quit your silliness — preaching about the Lord as father, miracles that bring greater suffering through the people's agitation for more, promises to create a heaven in this barren land — they will release you ... with only a beating to tame your inclination to madness.

Before, they asked you and you told them *I am the father's Word — given to the world of disbelievers. All who trust in me shall not die in their sin, but have eternal life.*

Your answer, of course, left them no choice but to dispose of you. They will execute their decision according to law and their religious understanding. To them you truly are a blasphemy. With a sense of regret but committed to their duty, they will deliver you to the Roman Governor. He will order your death while avowing no responsibility for it. In the final throes of your mortality, the judgment begins.

UMI

Caiphas' voice from the darkness.

Caiphas You know me to be a fair man. Let me then give testimony on behalf of those who, but for the hour and the pressing need for decision, would present you their evidence against him. As we judge this man's guilt, our just Lord measures the fate of our nation.

Know the charges against him. They are as numerous as our people's sins. The man 1) blasphemes our holy law, 2) misleads our people as he misrepresents the wisdom of our prophets and saints, 3) agitates, among those with little to lose, the end to all earthly authority, and 4) deceives the simple with the devil's spell.

Jesus, accused, do you deny the charge of blasphemy? My brothers, how can a man whose labor desecrates the Sabbath, who has abandoned his mother and the good memory of his late father, who urges his following to subvert the law of the prophets with his own law, who defends his disciples' disrespect of our elders' traditions, who forgives the adulteress' sin (as though he were God or next in line?) and who calls himself the son of God while those around him call him Christ; how can such a man deny the charge of blasphemy?

Pause

His silence is proof enough. Were any of us guilty of this charge, your condemnation would be certain. But we must be fair and complete. His army of leeches and bandits demands a righteous verdict.

Jesus, blasphemer, do you deny the charge of corrupting our nation's royal history and custom? Then speak to those who've seen you welcome sinners and unashamedly eat with them. Comfort those whose cleansed hands you've chastised. Instruct us in the art of inverting the rulings of Moses. Reassure the fathers of those children you would have leave their homes with the wealth of the family's inheritance, squander it on whores and wine, tire of honest labor, and return to their homes as though nothing had happened. If you would only but trace for us the line of succession from the great David to your asinine kingship, we would forget these proceedings and bow our knees in joyful adoration.

Pause

Your majesty seems dimmed when reflected in the light of honest examination.

Jesus, royal sham, do you deny the charge that you are an anarchist? The Roman Governor is anxious for your answer. The time for collecting taxes nears and he is in doubt of the strength of his garrison. This man, my brothers, openly mocks the rigorous spiritual discipline of our priests and the faultless manners of our lawyers. The Sanhedrin

UMI

he has made the object of public scorn. Many have overheard him announce his intention to bring division to Jerusalem by the sword. Would you pay all workers the same wage regardless of the work they do or the vigor with which they labor? Would you have all men released from their debts, their moral obligations? Not content to sabotage the economic fabric of our people, this, this peasant enters our temple and under the pretense of purifying it of undesirable elements he preaches good news ... good news for whom? For whom? For his master, whom we know resembles our Lord as much as a goat resembles a man.

Jesus, demon priest, do you deny the charge that you are the antichrist? Were it not for this, this charlatan's final atrocity, we still might discover within ourselves the way to pardon. Would our God pardon us if we allowed this devil's magic to deceive the simple and the innocent with his master's charms. A man who would stage healing miracles to trick the unwary into following him, who would burn the earth with the flame of his master, who purges people of their minor demons and reclaims them with the unclean spirit of major evils is still salvageable, but ...

Pause

This is the man ... this is the man ... this is the man. He stood in the sanctuary and raged. *You will destroy this temple. In three days I will raise it up.*

My brothers, he will destroy us, our faith, our history, our ritual. In three days his army will conscript us into the priesthood and holy advocacy of the devil. I put to you, my brothers, the question: Is it better for this man to die than for a godly nation to perish in hell?

Wild exclamations of approval.

Annas My son reveals a sound instinct for the inevitable. This man's ministry reduces the miracles of Yahweh to magician's tricks. Are we to tolerate the scandal of a god in the flesh to blaspheme the Lord of the burning bush? His advent into Jerusalem compares the rule of David to an ass rider whom lepers and paupers may proclaim King of the Jews. Are we to sit by and let this man's simple minded polemic substitute for the divine wisdom inspiring our royal history and the holy laws of Moses? With fable and story he lays waste the ageless doctrines and teachings of our sacred prophets. Will we let this bulbous glutton incapable of fighting a woman, let alone the enemies of Israel, quench the genuine thirst for a Messiah? If we do not condemn these crimes against the holy, then, little children, we deserve the unforgiving contempt of our ancestors and the final judgment of a wrathful God. Will you condemn this devil?

UMI

Wilder exclamations of approval.

Where stand his defenders? Let any man stand with him now and proclaim his divine sovereignty. Where is your defender?

Outside the Council chambers, Peter shouts.

Peter I know him not. He is a stranger to me!

Annas Naked before the wisdom of Israel, this man is alone. Little children, what is your verdict?

All

GIVE US BARABBAS
MESSIAH KING
SAVE YOURSELF
CRUCIFY HIM

Caiphas tears the shirt off Jesus and rips it in half.

Caiphas May the blessings of God, his peace and prosperity, be with his Chosen People now and forever.

All Amen.

Caiphas Allelulia.

END SCENE 3

SCENE 4, ACT 2

Setting: The entrance to Pilate's Praetorium.

Opening Dramatic Action: Pilate, in a state of disarray is attended by a young companion in a similar state of disarray. Pilate, visibly agitated and cold, reluctantly receives the Sanhedrin Elders who have Jesus under guard.

Annas This man, Excellency, has rallied popular support for a revolution. His unruly followers have anointed him king ... King of the Jews.

Pilate What are your internal bickerings to me?

Annas We have no King, Excellency. We are subjects of the Roman Emperor.

Pilate Subjects? Ingrates who insist upon your own religion, your own ritual, and your own God. You have an internal difficulty. Adjudicate it yourself.

UMI

Annas We pay our Emperor the tax he levies. We lend support to the Roman centurions' charge to keep the civil order. We do not interfere with your authority. Indeed, we welcome it, we serve it, we insist that our people honor and abide with it.

Pilate What is it that you require of me?

Annas Understanding, Excellency, cooperation.

Pilate To what end?

Annas The elimination of a mutual problem.

Pilate I am unconvinced Rome is affected.

Annas Appreciative of the urgency for decision and its execution, the Sanhedrin met this evening ...

Pilate You have an internal problem. The authority for such resolutions sits elsewhere. Address that throne, priest. Steven, give me your hand. Let Herod receive you and your phantom anarchist. Rome has not instructed me to preserve Israel.

Annas As you will, Excellency, as you will.

Pilate Priest, beware of the Furies. They seek out men of vengeance.

The Sanhedrin Elders exit.

END SCENE 4

SCENE 5, ACT 2

Setting: This scene uses three settings theatrically interdependent upon each another. They are the center of the stage, the upper room of the Cocks Inn, and Herod's private quarters.

Opening Dramatic Action: LEGION, having replaced the temple guard, surrounds Jesus at stage center. In continuous succession each clown whips Jesus' bare back. The blows are symbolic rather than actual inflicted pain. The repetition of these beatings should keep time with the Sanhedrin's chants of GIVE US BARABBAS. MESSIAH KING, SAVE YOURSELF. CRUCIFY HIM. *Peter is prostrate before LEGION who separates Jesus from him.*

UMI

Gathered in the banquet room of the Cocks Inn, the remaining Apostles receive the report of Jesus' encounter with Herod. Chusas, a follower of Jesus and the wife of Herod's steward, narrates the event for them while they grieve.

The Sanhedrin Elders are meeting with Herod in his private quarters. Herod's steward serves them wine.

Judas is still at the foot of Satan's throne contemplating his earnings.

Judas Is this how a Jew cherishes his tradition, his law, his covenant? He conspires with the devil, the whore of Babylon, and cowardly plotters.

He scatters his 30 pieces of silver on the ground.

Retrieve your mammon.

The clowns stop beating Jesus for a moment and gather the silver pieces.

I am a fool. I thought we could ransom our sins ... that we had to. The vast wealth of clowns will not redeem this pauper's singular betrayal.

Exit Judas

Chusas They entered Herod's palace through the servants' quarters. Fearing ... fearing what? ... us? ... miserable penitents ... fearing for themselves that he might be the Son he claims to be, they cover their conspiracy with darkness and muffle its dissonance with whispers. My husband opened the door. He too is weak. Men! He led the Elders to Herod. Jesus remained in the cellar with their guards. They wouldn't stop beating him. One beat him with straps of pig skin fastened to a wooden shaft, another cursed him, taunted him *Save yourself! Save yourself!* They spat on him. Streaked his open cuts with salt. Broke the scabs beginning to form so that fresh blood would drain into the dirt floor. They played him as a cat plays a mouse. I wanted to shout, to plead. But one does not plead with animals. They would have attacked me as well. May God punish that Judas. I dulled to the pain I felt for Jesus. He bore it without a whimper. All the while the priests and lawyers in the sanctuary of Herod's riches contrived their final solution. They disdained Herod's wine but not his diplomatic conceits.

The beatings stop. LEGION washes the blood from Jesus' body. The clowns mask his face with their clown's paint.

Herod The rule of Rome ushers from a shrew's sensibilities. With the flame of Pilate's desire ignite in his jealous mistress a tyrant's judgment.

Caiphas The art of influence is brushed upon the canvas of intrigue and framed within the gilded edge of ambiguity.

UMI

Herod You have bruised and broken the flesh of your bait. It could not attract a maggot. The beatings will come. Show a little patience. First apply paint to mask the blemish. With the proper illusion you'll, um, loose Pilate's sentiment — prelude to his queen's fury. Cleanse his body. Adorn it with floral scents. Cover it with this silken robe. Paint the face to resemble everyman. Enslave your king before you crucify him.

Annas By your leave, Holiness, we shall repair the damage and advise the Governor of your decision to rest the Nazarene's fate with him.

Herod One moment, Annas. What will you say to the people? The man still has followers, does he not?

Annas Our brother Saul has prepared a statement to be read in the temple this morning during the religious festivities. Brother Saul ...

Saul *Today, Jesus of Nazareth, bastard son of Joseph, Galilean pig farmer and part-time artisan, was released from Jewish custody, and, under the authority of imperial rule, surrendered to the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate. Upon finding Jesus guilty of conspiracy and high treason against the Roman government, Pilate ordered his execution. While we deplore this barbarous action, we must caution our people to refrain from any exhibition of sentiment. The Roman Eagle is poised to strike any and all who challenge its rule.*

Herod Masterful ... brilliant.

Annas approaches Jesus and clothes him in Herod's robe.

Chusas They washed his body but they couldn't hide the welts or bruises even with the paint they streaked upon his face ... a grotesque mask ... it could prime only the lust of a Sodomite. What beauty he had, and it was much even with his flesh desecrated, the mask obliterated.

Annas Perhaps the silken flesh, the phantasmagorical visage, the garden fragrances will mirror Pilate's want.

Chusas I fear for our Lord. No one is strong enough to stand by him.

Peter I know not the man. He is a stranger to me!

END SCENE 5

UMI

SCENE 6, ACT 2

Setting: The courtyard entrance to Pilate's Praetorium.

Opening Dramatic Action: The Sanhedrin Elders enter with Jesus, guarded by LEGION.

Annas Excellency, Herod has instructed us to return this man to your jurisdiction. These documents abbreviate his rationale.

Priest No doubt a masterful one.

Annas Our plight is not insignificant.

Pilate The armies of Rome advance upon the Northern darkness, the Southern desert, the Eastern decadence, and the Western seas. They have reduced the empire of Alexander to a minor colony. Caesar's peace will soon spread to the ends of the world. Never has greatness been so near. And you trouble me with your petty domestic quarrels. I should crucify you, priest, for this persistent aggrevation.

Steven Oooh, I covet your robe. Persian silk? I'll wager it came from Herod. He has such elegant things.

Pilate You may retire, Steven.

Steven I'm always retiring. Pontius thinks I'm a boor. Retire, recline, repose. The three r's ... but we Greeks are noted for our learning. Maybe I'll see you later?

Pilate Steven.

Steven As you will, Pontius. I am your obedient slave.

Steven exits.

Annas Governor, I am an old man. I have learned much and I have forgotten more. Death would be comforting. But I must pitch a tent and limp into my final battle. Hear me. You are a just man. This tired warrior asks only that you hear me through.

Pilate Proceed.

Annas This rebel has created a whirlwind of unrewarded expectation. Alive with grievance, the mass has begun to assault all symbols of authority and rule. Need I tell you, the structure of public life is brittle. The passivity of the impoverished many binds together the dominion of the chosen few. Our power is maintained through the indifference or despair of a military obedient unto death. Our wealth and high place usher from grateful citizens willing to tithe for their elevation

UMI

above the wretched of the earth ... the slaves and near animals who grope with their instincts and wits for a semblance of life.

But ... life, all life, is grounded in death's dominion. Earth's rulers glory in creation only through the temporary sufferance of death's Lord. You and I are nothing compared to a man who has fathomed the secret of life and death. Such a man is not merely a master; he is a god. This man you deem insignificant has called the dead to life. Unnatural allies, you and I must assault his divinity. Perhaps if everyone he has known betrays him, he will consent to die and in death leave us the life we've made. We cannot save our lives, but we might save ourselves from his meddling. Order his execution. If he remains with us, your sword will lose its terror and our prayers their ecstasy.

Pilate Your mysticism annoys me, old woman. I thought you were of men, a more reasonable sort. Leave him with me. I will interrogate your god. From his answers reason will reveal the course of Jewish divinity.

Annas Pilate, you can only lose.

Pilate Romans never lose. We have our own gods. They honor the Emperor.

Pilate and Jesus enter Pilate's interior quarters. The remaining members of the Sanhedrin and Martyrs enter the courtyard chanting GIVE US BARABBAS. MESSIAH KING, SAVE YOURSELF. CRUCIFY HIM.

Pilate King of the Jews. God of the priests. Hope of the poor. Healer of the diseased. You are something of a rainbow, are you not?

Jesus These are your titles?

Pilate Is it your place to question the Inquisitor?

Jesus What is your question?

Pilate Can't you hear it? It has become a hymn. *GIVE US BARABBAS. CRUCIFY HIM.* Your people are intent.

Jesus My people fear for their lives. My enemies fear I might live. They strain their voices and minds to bend your will to their design. My enemies are intent.

Pilate What do you feel ... here ... now?

Jesus Sadness. A wrenching, disquieting sadness.

Pilate You do not rejoice in your god ... then rejoice in me ... in my embrace, in my desire for life with its pleasures and disappointments. Open your mind to a man's love. My kisses will banish your sadness. Yours is a pretty face.

UMI

Jesus Twice have I been kissed tonight.

Pilate Are you so chaste that you would forfeit your body for the purity of your lips? *MESSIAH KING, SAVE YOURSELF!* The ironic king without country or sword chastises the Emperor's right hand.

Pause.

Have you ever seen a crucifixion? The executioner pierces the wrist bone with spikes. The blood clots quickly. With the cross beam in place, you desire only to fall, but you can't. Instead, you sink ... slowly ... from the armpits. The weight in your legs and chest tears your arms from your body. Each methodical rip compresses your ribs. As they break, they puncture your lungs. Soon each breath sears your entire body with pain. Pain. *Inhales.* Pain. *Inhales.* Pain. *Inhales.* Pain. Your final feeling. Blissful pain. But as with all pleasures, it becomes too much. And so you die. Death by suffocation. My soldiers toss what remains of the body into a common grave ... a garbage pit where animals feed. Yours is a pretty face. Not a trace of dread.

Your priests must think I am naive. *What can he be, a man who loves men? He'll do our bidding.* Pilate has been played by emotions and schemes once too often to render Caesar's judgment against you. I will picture for your people the monarch I see. GUARDS!

Enter Guards.

Pilate Hardly Praetorian. But they provide. Strip him to the waist. Such bruises and welts. They have primed your back for the cross brace. Add to his suffering your whip. Not in this darkness. In the full view of his adoring chorus. But first ... find him a crown ... in the rose garden. Weave it from headless stems. I want his forehead marked from the anguish of a king's coronet.

All but Pilate exit. He pauses.

Send me Barabbas. *Pause.* Silk is more permanent than flesh.

END SCENE 6

UMI

SCENE 7, ACT 2

Setting: Interior of Pilate's court.

Opening Dramatic Action: With the Sanhedrin still chanting, Pilate awaits Barabbas. The guards enter with Barabbas in chains.

Pilate Do you hear them? Do you hear them? They want you unchained. What does it feel to become a living legend? My Captain's prize. He doesn't want your freedom. Having brought home the game, he expects me to slaughter it for his soldiers' triumph. How can they feast if I let you roam again? Release a fool, punish an outlaw. Release an outlaw, punish a fool. Where is the justice in that? The people grow bacchanalian ... fed, as they must have been, with Dionysus' sacerdos. Where is the justice in that?

Pilate explodes by shouting

GIVE US BARABBAS

Why? You are nothing. My Captain will hunt you down and capture you again. We'll have a smile from you Barabbas ... or we'll have your life. Better.

Once again Pilate explodes.

GIVE US BARABBAS

Why should I give them power? Stupid custom. I am the Lord of this land, the prince of Roman authority. They'll be sated with his blood. He's just a man. I've humbled him. What is a man? ... nothing more than dust, spittle, and a dream. Do you have any dreams, Barabbas? What do you dream? To be free? You understand freedom? Free of necessity, nature, guilt, order. Order. To be free of the natural obession to transform life into one's dream. To be free. Philosophers misunderstand it. Tyrants diminish it. And prisoners ... prisoners lurch for freedom as an infant gropes for a chair, a table to sturdy himself during his struggle to walk. You've tasted it. You know its aroma, its shape, its texture. Purpose, Barabbas. Our lives must pulse with purpose; or we lose the right to dream. And losing the power of dreams, we forfeit our claim to divinity.

Teach me to be free. Just an elemental lesson. Release me from that man out there whose blood stains my hands. A trade, Barabbas. Your freedom for mine. You're sullen and graceless, slave. I am the Lord of this land; and I own, I own ... I own a barren waste and a joyless people.

UMI

Captain, frenzy calls out for sacrifice. Set up judgment's throne. I must complete the labor necessity demands of me.

Guards and Barabbas exit.

I wish the universe did house a god ... one with a responsibility greater than mine who might share my anguish.

END SCENE 7

SCENE 8, ACT 2

Setting: Pilate's throne of judgment — a platform elevated above the mob composed of the Sanhedrin and Martyrs.

Opening Dramatic Action: Pilate's royal guard and the platform separate Jesus and Barabbas from the chanting mob . LEGION, much like cheerleaders, leads the mob in its chanting. Barabbas responds to the chant GIVE US BARABBAS *as though he were a champion prizefighter acknowledging his fans.*

In the upper room of the Cocks Inn, the Apostles pray LORD BE MERCIFUL. CHRIST BE MERFICUL. JESUS BE JUST.

For the first time, the infirm outcasts of the city who, in their great need and hopelessness, are still loyal to Jesus, make their presence heard. From the edge of the auditorium, they begin to wail and wailing begin to draw near to Jesus in his suffering.

Hidden in the Sanhedrin's mob, Peter searches for the courage to stand before Pilate and defend Jesus.

Pilate enters and embraces Jesus. The fresh blood of Jesus' back covers Pilate's hands. He removes his robe and dresses Jesus.

Pilate Do you now feel the burden of regal authority?

Jesus I know only the joy of obedience.

Pilate Who are you?

Jesus Who do they say I am?

Pilate A carnival clown they've come to taunt.

Annas Will you finish it?

Pilate You are not content with his pain, his broken flesh, his humiliation before those who once praised him?

UMI

Annas We are not content?

Pilate Rome is not jeopardized.

Annas Our custom?

Pilate Captain, still the mob.

Guards SILENCE! PILATE WILL SPEAK TO YOU! SILENCE FOR THE GOVERNOR!

After the mob has quieted.

Pilate I have served you in your need and in your want. I have asked only that you honor Caesar's peace and help Caesar bear the weight of its cost. Your support has pleased Caesar, a magnanimous divine. He singles you out. You are his special people. You worship in your own temple. Caesar permits this defiance. You worship your own God. Caesar, the living god of history, permits this idolatry. You live in accord with your own customs and laws. Caesar, the just, permits this disharmony. His prince, I am bound by Caesar's righteousness to observe your customs in this your holiest of holy celebrations. You may ransom one of your own who has defiled the Emperor. Whom will you spare the climb to Caesar's mount of justice?

Crowd GIVE US BARABBAS!

Pilate Though you leave me with my Promethean punishment, you are free, Barabbas.

Crowd MESSIAH KING, SAVE YOURSELF! CRUCIFY HIM!

Annas Will you finish it?

Crowd CRUCIFY HIM!

Pilate Your plot?

Crowd CRUCIFY HIM!

Pilate No Jew custom binds me to this man's death. You claim he endangers Caesar. You claim his very presence will inspire insurrection. You claim he is a king. Where are his subjects to prove your claim?

Peter I KNOW NOT THE MAN! HE IS A STRANGER TO ME!

Crowd MESSIAH KING, SAVE YOURSELF!

Annas Defeat is an illusion, Pilate. Weakness parents strength. You can conquer a people without raising dust. You can topple an empire without changing the guard. Free this man — you might as well condemn yourself to the cross you lift

UMI

from his back. You think me vain, but the Jew is a survivor. He has seen Egypt consumed from deceit, Macedonia decay from self-indulgence. Rome, the infant upstart, is no less erosible.

Pilate Ancient histories do not intimidate us. You lash out with shadows. Substance, priest, your terror lacks substance.

Amos maneuvers three members of Sandhedrin, dressed to look like commoners, before Pilate's throne.

Annas Do you hear? Do you hear these people? Think of their need, of their dreams, of their terrors. You think they are not humbled? You think they do not suffer from coming here and howling for his death? That man is a potter. That man has three children and he has lost his wife. That man ... that man is a cripple who was not healed. They told him his faith was not strong enough. Faith? In what? A spiritual absurdity — self-anointed divinity. For every miraculously restored limb, ten shriveled limbs hang from the bodies of ten faithless men ... men who will never feel pride, who will never know what it is to rejoice in each new day, whose appearance repulses all but the dead. They know this man ridicules them ... more than he threatens you or me. Let their grief move you. Trouble your justice with the destiny of more than one man. The blood of justice will lose its shame in the cleansing tears of their joy.

We debase ourselves for what is commonplace throughout your empire. Put our antichrist to the cross. In a week, in a month, all will have forgotten his name.

The intensity of the Sanhedrin's hatred and insistence climaxes here in a volume that Pilate must shout above to be heard.

Pilate JEW KING ...

In expectation of Pilate's judgment, the Sanhedrin become quiet. In counter to this growing stillness, Jerusalem's infirm intensify their dirge-like wail.

Pilate Your subjects condemn you.

Now the wailing subsides. Only the Apostles' lament remains audible: LORD BE MERCIFUL. CHRIST BE MERCIFUL. JESUS BE JUST.

Pilate Who am I to oppose the will of Caesar's favored tribe?

Jesus bows to Pilate. The Roman guard takes charge of Jesus. They taunt him, spit on him, and drag his body through the Crowd that assaults him with rocks, dirt, spittle, and insults. As the guards parade Jesus through the crowd, LEGION initiates a

UMI

victory celebration for Barabbas. In good spirits, the Sanhedrin, bearing Barabbas aloft, rush into the city night.

Annas holds up a silver bowl filled with water. Pilate dips his blood-encrusted hands into the bowl. Pilate picks up his robe which has been torn from Jesus. He wipes his hands on the robe. Steven enters and silently escorts the numb Governor into his palace.

Annas carries the bowl of bloody water.

Peter, crippled from self-pity, approaches the throne of judgment. His whimpering ends the second act.

END ACT 2

UMI

SCENE 1 ACT 3

Setting: The city street that leads to Golgotha.

Opening Dramatic Action: Minutes before dawn, Lazarus enters the deserted street. The narrator to Jesus' crucifixion, burial, and resurrection, he addresses the Audience.

Lazarus The times have deafened the Lord to a mother's appeal.

Mary, who with Enoch has waited through the night for Jesus to appear, begins to lament.

Mary, Mother of Jesus Who are you? My son, my son. The kettle boils over. The roof leaks. The garden yields only weeds. The home of your father needs repair. The years have fatigued me. An old woman needs a young man's dreams. Come home, my son. What does your suffering accomplish? My son, my son, the home of your father needs repair. Leave the agony of prophecy to motherless children. Who are you?

Lazarus Jesus hears only heaven's word.

From their refuge in the upper room of Cock's Inn, the Apostles minus Peter and Judas intone for the duration of the crucifixion:

Apostles Lord be merciful. Christ be merciful. Jesus be just.

Lazarus Female lamentations from those who refuse to abandon him reach out to comfort.

Offstage, the voices of Veronica, Mary Magdalene, Chusas, and Joanna raise this hymn which they chant for the duration of the crucifixion:

Women

Golgotha, Golgotha
Cavity of Death.
Repent, Repent
Give up your Death.

Lazarus The morning sun breaks open the day of tears to expose the night of deceit.

The Crowd, composed of LEGION and the Sanhedrin, parades Barabbas aloft.

Barabbas I AM BARABBAS!

Crowd TRUE SON OF THE FATHER, RESTORE ISRAEL!

UMI

Barabbas I AM BARABBAS!

Crowd TRUE SON OF THE FATHER, RESTORE ISRAEL!

Barabbas I AM BARABBAS!

Crowd TRUE SON OF THE FATHER, RESTORE ISRAEL!

Barabbas I AM BARABBAS!

Crowd TRUE SON OF THE FATHER, RESTORE ISRAEL!

Barabbas I AM BARABBAS!

Crowd TRUE SON OF THE FATHER, RESTORE ISRAEL!

From the balcony of his quarters, Pilate surveys the spectacle of the street. Steven lingers in the darkness.

Steven Pontius, let it be.

Pilate My justice prepared that orgy of adoration. Why was I moved to banality?

Steven Your natural compassion.

Pilate You mock me as well?

Steven I?

Pilate OUT!

Steven Please ...

Exit Steven.

Barabbas I AM BARABBAS!

Crowd TRUE SON OF THE FATHER, RESTORE ISRAEL!

Barabbas I AM BARABBAS!

Pilate Captain!

Crowd TRUE SON OF THE FATHER, RESTORE ISRAEL!

Pilate Bring me Barabbas.

Barabbas I AM BARABBAS!

Crowd True Son of the Father, Restore Israel.

Pilate I will be clean. Do you hear me, Barabbas?

UMI

Exit Captain.

Barabbas' vitality and the Crowd's enthusiasm are diminishing rapidly.

Barabbas I am Barabbas.

Pilate I AM THE LORD OF THIS LAND!

Barabbas I am Barabbas.

Pilate AND I WILL BE CLEAN!

The Crowd begins to disperse. Barabbas is discarded drunk and no longer cognizant of his surroundings. Just when the Crowd's energy seems to have dissipated, a soldier's detachment leads Jesus and his meager following through the street. The women following Jesus continue their hymn. The Crowd reacts venomously to the battered figure of Jesus.

Crowd CRUCIFY HIM! MESSIAH KING, SAVE YOURSELF.

Jesus Abba, forgive them. They do not understand your love.

Jesus repeats this prayer as he struggles to walk through the hostile crowd. The soldiers are indifferent to his pain. Jesus stumbles under the weight of the cross brace he bears. Veronica moves to him and wipes his face. The leader of the soldiers, Marius, grabs her and throws her into the crowd. Jesus attempts to rise and again stumbles. Marius forcibly enlists one of the men in Jesus' following to carry the cross brace. The Crowd taunts Veronica and then Jesus.

Crowd WHORE! WANT A REAL MAN, BABY. PEDDLE YOUR ASS SOMEWHERE ELSE, SLUT! ON YOUR FEET, JEW KING. LEPER LOVER. PIMP. SAVE YOURSELF!

Jesus Abba, forgive them. They do not understand your love.

Crowd CRUCIFY HIM! CRUCIFY HIM! CRUCIFY HIM! CRUCIFY HIM!

The procession toward Golgotha resumes. Annas appears at the entrance to the temple. He motions for Marius to approach him. In one hand, he holds the bowl in which Pilate washed his hands.

Annas Give this to him when he thirsts.

Marius That ah will, yer honah, that ah will. Ah mun builds ah tremenous thirst on dah way ta dead.

Annas Go in peace, my son, to do what must be done.

UMI

Marius Mah dudy, yer honah, mah dudy?

Annas Everyman's duty goes with you, my son.

Marius Yer honah.

Marius rejoins the march to the hill of death. The crowd has abandoned Jesus and finally disperses. Satan appears at the foot of Golgotha where Jesus once again has fallen.

Satan My desert exists to pose the question ... What is the last temptation of Christ? To pass the cup of salvation to another or to accept it for his meaning and being?

Jesus rises and takes upon his shoulders the cross brace another man had been forced to carry.

Jesus Abba, forgive your fallen prince.

Marius Move along, Jew. Yuv get sum strechin' out ta do.

Satan Sardonic humor from a common misfit in soldier's disguise. Priceless.

Marius Ah sed move on, Jew.

Satan Make way, make way. The tree of life waits to transfigure the carpenters' God.

The soldiers and Jesus reach the top of Golgotha. Jesus' following watch meekly as the soldiers fasten Jesus to the cross beam he has carried and as they attach the beam to the grounded pole. The crucifixion begins. The wailing of the Infirm rises in pitch and volume, though it is still subtly present. The Apostles leave their refuge in the Cock's Inn. They redeem the Martyrs from their Crowd role. With the Martyrs, the Apostles kneel at the base of Golgotha and resume their Kyrie. While the soldiers prepare Jesus for the crucifixion, Peter wanders tearfully through the Garden of Gethsemane.

Peter Who do you say I am? And the fisher of men thrice thought only of himself. *I know not the man — this stranger plaguing my life.* INFIDEL! I have slept with the whores of Rome. Will cold embers cleanse my tongue of false witness?

Who do you say I am? And the fisher of men thrice betrayed his knowledge. *I know not the man. He is no Christ for me.* HYPOCRITE! I have paraded my faith with the priests of Israel. Will the desert wind hide me in a tomb of clay?

UMI

Who do you say I am? And the fisher of men thrice denounced his holy brother. *I know not the man or his divine folly.* SON OF CAIN! I have marked my destiny with the stain of pride. Will the garden of his final temptation forget my sin?

At the foot of the cross.

Soldiers

He won't need his clothes.
Not where he's goin'.
Roll for the Jew King's pretty robe.
Ah sawr Pilate giv' id ta hum.
Long with a golden crown?
Ah sawr hum pud id on hum.
And you saw us take it off him.
Who brought the dice?
Who's first to roll?
Scavenger.
Wad you?
A redeemer of unused goods.
Lah dee dah. Roll wiz ass.
Three birds on the first roll.
Luck. Never seen luck like yours.
The dice and I understand.
Unnerstan' mah arse.
Three swords on one roll!
Where's your famous luck now?
Sometimes you win ...
And sometimes you don't. Who's going to beat my swords?

Mary, Mother of Jesus May I have my son's clothing?

Demetrius Your son?

Mary, Mother of Jesus The man you're murdering.

Demetrius Murderers dangle from crosses. We're soldiers. The State proposes and the military disposes. I'm sorry, madame, but we have our orders and we must obey. Or our fate would be the same as his. To claim your son's possessions, you need a requisition order from the officer in charge.

UMI

Mary, Mother of Jesus Who?

Demetrius The one holding the dice in his hands.

Mary, Mother of Jesus Are you the officer in charge?

Marius FOUR WHORES! AH WIN!

Mary, Mother of Jesus Excuse me. Are you the officer in charge?

Marius Ah mid be sisder. Wha' of i'?

Mary, Mother of Jesus I need your aid.

Marius Ever'one do. 'Specially da ones hangin' up der life. Gid i'? Hangin' up der life. Das na' bad, iz i', boys?

Soldiers Naw, Marius, that's not bad.

Marius Wadyawan'?

Mary, Mother of Jesus My son's garment.

Marius Soz why cums ta me?

Mary, Mother of Jesus You have it.

Marius Hell I does.

Mary, Mother of Jesus In your hand.

Marius Dis robe?

Mary, Mother of Jesus That robe.

Marius I's mine. Ah jus' won i'.

Mary, Mother of Jesus You have no right.

Enoch Let it be, Mary.

Marius No righ'? No righ'! Ta condem's robe? He's as gud as daid, lady. Hez gah' as much righs ta anyting as a whore's haz tah man's respec'. Nah moves 'long 'for ah 'rests yah.

Mary, Mother of Jesus You steal my son's life. Now you would rob me of a remembrance.

Marius Ah'd rahb ma own mudder. If she hahd anyting wor' takin'. Nah moves 'long.

Mary, Mother of Jesus The conqueror's gift is a soldier's vulgarity.

Marius Ah means i' lady.

Soldiers He means it lady.

UMI

Enoch Let it be, Mary.

Mary, Mother of Jesus I will not abandon my son.

Marius LADY!

Mary, Mother of Jesus I won't abandon my son in his suffering.

Demetrius Drink, Marius. Drink to your good fortune.

Soldiers DRINK, MARIUS. DRINK TO YOUR GOOD FORTUNE!

Marius Ta Marius. Da meanest SON OF AH BITCH IN DIS MAN'S ARMY!

Soldiers TO MARIUS!

Jesus Mother, leave the things life has thrust upon me to those impoverished with greed.

Mary, Mother of Jesus My son, I do not understand you.

Jesus In your love, you gave me life. I am returning to God who gives life the second time.

Mary, Mother of Jesus Who are you?

Jesus The Son of Man for sons of men. Look to your new son. Go with him. He shall repair your home. Enoch, look upon your mother and be glad.

In Pilate's quarters. The Captain of the guard enters with Barabbas.

Pilate Have they unbound Prometheus?

Barabbas Why am I arrested?

Steven Detained ... at the pleasure of the Governor.

Barabbas What do you want?

Pilate He nauseates me with his Greek form, his polished flesh, his unashamed sensuality. But he too will pass away. Nature is so decadent. You understand me, Jew?

Barabbas I am drunk.

Pilate I debase myself with this child to murder my future. My seed dies in his barrenness. Your King.

Barabbas I have no king.

Pilate Your King's mortality closes the adoration of birth. I am your Lord. Steven?

UMI

Steven Pontius?

Pilate Enlighten our metamorphotal to the joys of immutability.

Barabbas What's happening?

Pilate I AM your Lord, Jew, or your skull will lie next to your King's.

Steven Come, love. You will delight in my instruction.

Exit Steven and Barabbas.

Pilate Have the vultures finished?

At the cross.

Jesus I thirst.

Marius Whad he say?

Demetrius He's thirsty.

Marius Yah dont say. Ah get jusd da ting. Here yah goes Jew boy. Takes ah dink if yah kin.

Marius splashes Jesus' body with the bloody water.

Marius Lick id up, Jew.

Jesus I thirst for the cup of heaven.

Marius Don' we all, brudder, don' we all.

Marius drinks himself into a stupor. Eventually he passes out. Peter approaches the cross from its rear. Jesus doesn't see him.

Peter I know you Lord. I know you. I KNOW THIS MAN. HE IS THE CHRIST! May he forgive us all our sins.

Jesus Son of Jonah, Simon my rock, do you love me?

The soldiers grab Peter and drag him from the cross. His sword falls upon the ground.

Peter You crucify the Son of God. I LOVE YOU, JESUS. Forgive me. I love you, Jesus. Forgive me. I love you, Jesus. FORGIVE ME!

The soldiers release Peter at the base of Golgotha. Disoriented and resembling a drunk, he moves into the street where he passes Judas similarly disoriented but moving toward the cross. With his coin purse prominently hung from his neck, Judas follows the soldiers to the cross.

Jesus Simon, my brother, feed God's lambs.

UMI

Judas The judgment begins.

An innocent man, an innocent man. They are killing an innocent man. God's fury, God's fury upon those who would kill an innocent man.

Innocent? Innocent? Guilty. GUILTY! You and your God are guilty ... You bear the guilt of innocence. Your purity condemns and in this your posture of accusation with your blood washing away the saint's stain you commend the civilized destruction of the heartless other.

Shall I foretell the glorification of your preyful sacrifice?

The phantom of your love will debase the love of flesh. The breath, the sweet breath of your heart will erode the stench of death. Sanctified in your glory, man will exalt himself in images of an other worldly city while he despises the sweat, urine, and decay of this Jerusalem.

We will divinize your word above the unfathomable reaches of the cosmos ... but we will never understand you. In your name we shall rent asunder the universal household you proclaim. In your name, our hearts shall cease to grieve for the loss of the stranger. In your name, our lips will curse the Paraclete, always surprising us with your relentless summons.

Beyond all this absurdity, the proof of your guilt lives in those sins left unforgiven in the New Jerusalem. Already your chosen villify the names of the frail and fallen creatures whose ignorance you have used.

Annas, Pilate, Herod — no less nor more vile than any other rulers of this age ... their witless participation in your self-serving destruction will bring them the revulsion of all human memory. Your night of sorrow has been short, too damnably short, to redeem them from the guilt your cross will venerate.

Judas elevates his coin purse.

And what of me, Jesus of Nazareth? What of me ... a man called last to tread in the dust of your gait. What of my suffering? My kiss shall equate with villainry. My name will condemn wherever it is spoken. My deed will so tarnish silver that no laboring hosts of servants will ever scrub it clean. The blood pouring from me will not sanctify. No garden for the earth it stains. My broken body will yield among the nations no regal praise, no yearned for blessing. I will center no pious mystic's vision. I ... I ... I ... my eternal suffering condemns your innocence.

May your promise go unfulfilled until the day you atone with my passion. My hour too has come, son of Man; only it is more solitary than yours.

UMI

Exit Judas

Satan The earth opens her wounds and devours her offspring. Your sheep, good shepherd, is truly lost.

Jesus My God, my God, why must I die in this desert?

The infirm who have remained on the hill now advance to the cross. Their dirge increases in volume.

Jesus Abba, unto you I surrender my breath.

Satan The morning star descends through the bowels of nothingness and is no more.

Jesus It is finished ...

Mary, Mother of Jesus My son, MY SON!

The infirm have reached the foot of the cross. Their dirge covers all other sounds. As the soldiers drive them away, the burial party takes the body of Jesus down from the cross. Nicodemus hands Demetrius a parchment scroll releasing Jesus' body to him. Mary cradles her dead son at her bosom.

Mary, Mother of Jesus Is this how God rewards a mother's suffering? My womb carried your promise into Bethlehem. My heart saw you safely into Egypt. My nurture brought you to manhood. Your father gave you an honest trade. Were you content?

Nicodemus He is the Lord, Mary.

Mary, Mother of Jesus He was my son. I was his mother. My love may have been simple, but it was all I had to give.

Mary Magdalene And for your gift, your name will be blessed.

Mary, Mother of Jesus I would have eternity damn it, if it would spare a mother's arms a son's death.

Joseph He must be buried, Mary.

Mary, Mother of Jesus And who will put my grief to rest?

Enoch I am here, Mother Mary.

Mary, Mother of Jesus Child, I am an old woman, broken of heart. Help me to walk among the sons of men.

UMI

Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimethea wrap Jesus in a burial shroud. With the women weeping and chanting GOLGOTHA, GOLGOTHA. CAVITY OF DEATH. REPENT. REPENT. GIVE BACK YOUR DEAD., *the burial party carries Jesus to the Garden of Gethsemane where his tomb is. The Apostles and Martyrs follow. Lazarus remains at the cross.*

Lazarus

Lamb of God
You take away the stench of sin
Have compassion for us.
Lamb of God
You take away the stain of sin
Have compassion for us.
Lamb of God
You've taken away the sleep of sin
Grant us peace.

Lazarus leaves in pursuit of the burial party. Only Satan remains on Golgotha's peak.

Satan Crucify him. Crucify him. Crucify him.

END SCENE 1

SCENE 2, ACT 3

Setting: Jesus' tomb. The burial party with the Apostles and Martyrs mourn Jesus. Two soldiers posted by Pilate guard the tomb.

Lazarus Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Man, is dead and buried. His legal assassination even idiots foretold. The advent of his heavenly kingdom decays with his cleansed and perfumed body in that tomb. Its unmoveable boulder and Roman guard separate his underworld from his beloveds' grief.

Is this not the fate common to all men? A man embarks from the midst of history. Along the way, he finds the port of character from which he charts his own destination. If a man's destiny is noble, he sees his certain enemies covet his triumphs. Miserly wretches, they level him to the world's tempestuous humiliations where his dreams shatter upon the reef of finitude.

UMI

The eventuality sinks into the *now*. The now leaves a man no choice but to honor or rage against the frailty of all alluring destinations. The honorable man suffers more than angry men. Embracing brokenness, he fills this ending *now* with the painful visions of what will never be.

Those who admired his life and those who feared his consequence hide his corpse under the dust of ritual and the ashes of might. Those who love him gather at the gate of death and weep at their loss.

Could the son of Man have come to any other end?

The surrounding horizon is clouded with the mortal fragments swept up in the whirlwind of the Lord's passion.

Peter Whom did you betray, Judas? Your scattered silver rewards the poor too hardened by daily survival for the charity of sweet eternity. They understand your kiss. Its payment has bought succor for a day: drink for their hopelessness, cloth for their homelessness, food for their wealthlessness. To them with no want for God, you were a victor. To God with no want for vengeance, you were forgiven. But to yourself, poor Judas, you were a soul in exile from heaven and from earth. No tribunal to condemn you, you condemned yourself. Where do you wander now that your neck has broken? Have you really fled from the Lord, or have you merely followed after him in search of pardon?

Caiphas My father is dead. His given life has preserved God's cherished people. We rejoice, in spite of our pain, from his sacrifice. My brothers, Israel lives! We must never forget the name of that man who, from vision, with compassion, for the sake of holiness, led our nation to the renewal of God's trust. Sacred Annas, you laid seige to the Roman trespass upon our holy ground. Sacred Annas, you prepared our hearts and wills for the coming of God's victory over our enemies. Go forth, oh Israel, with the name of your most sacred father always at your lips.

During Pilate's monologue and Jesus' dialogue with Satan, the Apostles, Martyrs, and men of the burial party leave the grave site and return to the upper room of the Cocks Inn. Only the women stay at the tomb.

Pilate My hands are still unclean. I hear rumors. The Sanhedrin now plots for my rule. Betrayal is the order of the day. That frail Galilean murdered, I will make of the Jews a fragment people. I will have no stain remaining. My will be done. I am the Lord of this land and I will it desolation ... desolation ... desolation.

Satan Tears fall from heaven. The angel's sorrow searches out God's dead Son. Long live his death.

UMI

Jesus Why do you persecute me?

Satan The dead query the dead?

Jesus Why do you persecute me?

Satan Am I alive? You touch the corruption of flesh. I am its rot. You taste the bitterness of illusion. I am perfect falsehood. You entertain a moment of lost being. I am nothingness.

Three days estranged from God, and for this men will worship you. But I am the real stranger whose breach of grace is more courageous.

Jesus You persist? Is the creature more worthy? God created you to praise, not for praise. Yet your nature denied, your damnation assured. Know this: I will expose your mirage of dignity for the lie it has always been. From the gift I bring, the willful creature may transcend the selfish need to be God.

Why have I suffered your cross? Pain is a rhythm as intrinsic to living as warmth and delight. Death is a moment in the rush of time — no more, no less. Time is a frame for awaiting holiness. I have not suffered pain and death; I have suffered your hate. Why fight what you are — a creature of my love for my love?

Embrace me, Lucifer. Become again light's Prince. Put aside your second dead. Reveal to them the truth of their nature that they may want and be saved.

Satan Three days among the damned merits Lucifer's penitence? Then exhale Cherubim and Seraphim that in full view of heaven's court God might see my injury and petition my forgiveness.

Is rebellion deserving of the creator's fury? Does the artisan smash the flawed pot? Does the mother murder her lame child? Does the mind discard an unorthodox idea? Though men have tolerance for imperfection, He who forms the Word in flesh terrorizes history with the hidden Christ extorting love from monarch to grave digger lest they forfeit their second salvation.

Men die. Their world ends with a mourning chorus. Moistened dust of Adam, men die. Their tombs fill with decadent failings. Who can save them? You, their dead Lord? Long live your death!

Jesus I will not be contained in your deception. The angels are mute only for an instant. Soon, history, awaiting her master, will resound with their hymns of joy, for I am he.

Satan The world has crucified the Lord of Love. Will history show the stranger any greater kindness?

UMI

Jesus Such is the savior's risk.

Satan Then break death's seal. Rise to the call of the angel's trumpet. But do not ask me to repent my cross. You may be free of it but many sons yet must come to the knowledge here before the cast-out serpent will walk erect. The wounds of my belly do not inspire me to mercy.

Jesus Free? Free. I am not risen above your hate. Every child a parent batters. Every person a thief deprives. Every human being a war destroys or prejudice retards binds me ever more firmly to your cross. I rise to walk among sinners that they might love the stranger and in their loving bring earth to heaven and you to light.

Satan Then salvation's passion crucifies the heavenly firmament. This creature's pride will never atone with the Creator's jealous love.

Lazarus Alive again, I await my second death. I am the living testimony to your redeeming miracle. Lord, each of us comes to the moment of salvation from an intricate web woven with events, feelings, memories, knowledge, and failings. These strands conspire against the novelty flitting free. In their accumulation the more impossible our freedom from the insulation of being becomes and the more awesome seems the risk to accept the novel. Love fades away into the shadows of memory and the savior's promise recedes. Things remind us of their weight. We mellow and learn to differentiate dreams and candle light from illusive oaths and the morning sun. Ritual supplants faith. The pilgrim puts away his pack and begins to build the cathedral. Rather than pulse with the spontaneous rhythms of life, the heart gathers things to treasure.

The feminine sensibility alone cherishes you, Lord, even in your death. Woman glorifies God and rebukes the fickleness of man's faith.

I am a man — more man than woman. I curse my Lord for abandoning me. I neglect his presence in the uncommon stranger breaking bread with me. But I have known him. My web vibrates from the impulse to lose myself and walk with the beloved where I will become a man drunk from the wine of care. I may lose my balance, but I will find my heart.

Trumpet fanfare. The angels' Sanctus *resumes in full measure.*

END SCENE 2

UMI

SCENE 3, ACT 3

Setting: Garden of Gethsemane. Mary and the other women are mourning the death of Jesus.

The following is set to Ode to Joy.

Jesus

Israel
Oh Israel
Why do you weep, why do you weep?
But for your stony grief
No tomb would hold me.

Israel
Oh Israel
Why do you stumble, why do you stumble?
But for your troubled mind
No doubts would obscure me.

Jesus appears to the women.

Jesus

Israel
Oh Israel
Where is your joy, where is your joy?
In my empty tomb
Your mothers understand their hope.
In my wholing breath
Sin's captives hear their pardon.
In my wounded hands
Bread fragments feel belonging.

Israel
Oh Israel
Where is your song, where is your song?
Your prophets proclaim me
Your lost sons cry out for me
The Angels praise me.

UMI

Israel
Oh Israel
Where is your dance, where is your dance?
The flame of my glory
Consecrates your destiny
The ascension of my humanity
Weds you to divinity
The promised Paraclete
Summons you, oh Israel
To my Dance!

Jesus exits. The women begin to dance to the Angels' Sanctus.

Mary, Veronica, and the other women take the dance from the Garden into the streets to the Cocks Inn, where they incorporate the Apostles and Martyrs in the resurrection celebration. Matthew withdraws from the ballet to address the audience.

Matthew I return as I promised I would. Come to the Lord's celebration. Break bread with us. Complete our play with thanksgiving. Attest to Christ's miracle transforming the illusions of an alien space into the worthy hopes of martyrdom.

The cross is now yours. Take it for your own in the worship of our Lord's name. Let it bring you from solitude to our communion.

If your body holds back, do not be troubled. Posture or place are not the architects of worship. Turn your hearts to prayer that you might hear the Evangels' good news and give thanks.

The dance has ended. All participants form a worshipping community gathered in the street around an altar covered by Veronica's shroud.

Peter Our Lord, Jesus, God's Anointed, instructs us to member Him with us, in us, through us. His ministry informs our prayer. His life justifies our hope. His meal unifies our brokenness.

Breath of God, healing breath of our Lord, raise in us the life the Risen One has prepared for us.

UMI

Trusting our Savior's promise, brothers and sisters, approach His altar. Devote yourselves to our heaven-bound brother as He has devoted himself to you. In God's house, we proclaim love's mystery.

All I bind my life to God.

Apostles

Maker of all that has been, is, and will be.
Poet of our forsaken paradise.
Cherisher of our unclean hearts.
Liberator of our bondaged lives.
Lord of our promised Israel.
Abba of our salvation, Jesus our brother.

He emptied himself of heaven's wealth
To walk with us in peace.
To teach us the miracles of chastity.
To save us from the Evil One's death,
He humbled himself on Pilate's cross.
There he died.
He was buried.
Where we sought to mourn him,
His tomb was empty.
He is risen.
The Risen One has gone before us into heaven.
With us now is our Savior's Paraclete.

I offer my heart to the spirit of holiness,
Enduring breath for my mortality,
Light for darkness,
Wisdom for unknowing,
Forgiveness for infidelity,
Blessed companion for lonely exile.

UMI

Peter Breath of God, descended with the doves of peace, unite us with our brother in the breaking of this bread and the drinking of this wine.

The bread is broken. Jesus, our beloved, take us for your self.

The bread is eaten.

In the desert we thirst. The wine overflows the cup.

The wine is drunk.

Jesus, through the passion of your heart we enter boldly the external communion of your Abba and raise our voice with the angels praising holiness.

All

Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna
Lord of Love and Light.
Earth our home is filled with your bounty.
Holy are You
God of our life.

END SCENE 3

UMI

EPILOGUE

From the midst of the celebration:

Lazarus I see the sacrifice ventured from the altar of human fallibility. I see the apostolate converge upon a faithless world with the gift of healing and the privilege of fidelity. I see the Church bemuse unbelievers as though she were an antiquated novelty in an aging spinster's curio shop. I see the patience of God as his painful reach embraces the tree of life.

In my heart I hear his epilogue. In this end arrives our beginning.

Jesus

Love's passion knows no boundary.
Before the birth of creation — I am.
Through the cosmic evolutions — I am.
At time's end and death's invitation — I am.

Love gives me breath that I might bring you life.
I am your brother — found in myth.

Oh Poets
Make mine a story complete with a sound and a fury
Signifying everything, that
All might learn of the miracle of love
And rejoice in God's house forever.

END OF THE PLAY

UMI